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MARCH, 1950



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DON CAMERON ALLEN

CLIFFORD P. LYONS

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ROY H. PEARCE

EARL R. WASSERMAN

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THE LIFE AND DEATH OF LONGE WILLE

By HOWARD MERONEY

1

“Charity suffereth long”

Piers Plowman has often been attributed to William Langland, the Great English Unknown, whose name does not appear “in any of the numerous archives of the [fourteenth] century . . . no trace of him whatsoever being found in the records or in the literature of the age.”¹ This defect of fame is nothing singular—we know as little about, say, Laurence Minot—but the argument drawn from it would be less unsettling if Langland’s name were like Minot’s, solidly fixed where it stands.

Externally, the principal evidence is a fifteenth century note in Trinity College, Dublin, MS D. 4. 1. (C-Text): *Memorandum, quod Stacy de Rokayle, pater Willielmi de Langlond [etc.] . . . qui prædictus Willielmus fecit librum qui vocatur Perys Ploughman*. The discrepancy in surnames here is a cause of contention, which later marginalia and MS notes only aggravate, and the case is worsened by charges of irregularity, if not fraud, impugning the testimony of Bale and Crowley.² Even

¹ Morton W. Bloomfield, “Present State of *Piers Plowman* Studies,” *Speculum*, XIV (1939), 222. I am reviewing elsewhere the major study of recent years, E. T. Donaldson’s *Piers Plowman, the C-Text and its Critics* (New Haven, 1949), from which my profit, though great, must now be in silent afterthought. *Scripta litera manet*.

² The documents have been widely publicised, e.g., by W. W. Skeat, *Piers the Plowman in Three Parallel Texts* (Oxford, 1886), II, xxvii ff. (citations of *PPI* otherwise undesignated are from this edition), J. E. Wells, *A Manual of the Writ-*

more suspect is the internal evidence. It is thought to occur in the B-Text, Passus XV, l. 148: "I haue lyued in londe, quod I, my name is Longe Wille." Since Skeat noticed the apparent inversion, students have grown accustomed to hear that this line "contains *wille longelonde* backwards."³ To hold two opinions, or none, about an observation so sinister cannot be right, yet Skeat could only inquire further, "Is this a mere chance?" to which Manly but replied, "It is possible, however, that this is really the source of the name."⁴ Since then, no critic has removed doubt from the simple crux, whether the line is acrostic.

For the negative, Manly initiated a disproof on the grounds of triteness, citing parallel readings to show that "I haue lyued in londe" is a cliché from the stock of Middle English alliterative formulas.⁵ While granting this point, it is hard to believe that a cipher could never be couched in hackneyed phrases. More telling, however, are several unnoticed passages in *Piers Plowman* itself, where the main ideas of the questioned verse are likewise found in near proximity:

I bated hem on the bakke · and bolded here hertis,
And dede hem hoppe for hope · to haue me at *wille*.
Had I ben marschal of his men · (bi Marie of heuene!)
I durst haue leyde my *lyf* · and no lasse wedde,
He shulde haue be lorde of that *londe* · a *lengthe* and a brede.

B III 198-202

Who-so worcheth bi *wille* . . .
For bothe thi *lyf* and thy *londe* · lyth in his grace.

B IV 70-73

For I shal lene hem lyflode · but ȝif the *lond* fayle,
As *longe* as I *lue* · for vr lordes loue of heuene.

A VII 16-17

. . . ȝowre man shal I worthe
As *longe* as I *lyue* · bothe late and rathe,
For to worche ȝowre *wille*.

B X 143-45

ings in Middle English, 1050-1400 (New Haven, 1916), pp. 250 ff. Cargill's attack on Bale and Crowley, *PMLA*, L (1935), 35 ff., disrupts the argument, but it is undoubtedly too severe.

³ Skeat, *op. cit.*, II, xxxi, n. 2.

⁴ Cf. *Cambridge History of English Literature* (Cambridge, 1908), II, 40.

⁵ J. M. Manly, "The Authorship of *Piers Plowman*," *Modern Philology*, VII (1909), 97, n. 1, quoting particularly *Sir Ferumbas*, l. 2793, "Welawo, to longe y lyue in londe." The latest reaffirmation of Manly's views on the authorship, and on the poem generally, is J. R. Hulbert's "*Piers the Plowman* after Forty Years," *Modern Philology*, XLV (1948), 215-25.

Moche hardier may he axen · that here my³te haue his *wille*
 In *londe* and in lordship · and likynge of bodye,
 And for goddis loue leueth al · and *lyueth* as a beggere.

B XIV 261-63

Surely it would be an act of audacity to insist that these examples conceal the fragments of a coded name. They suggest instead an unreflecting habit of diction and alliteration into which a name-conscious "Wille Longelonde" would be least likely to fall.⁶

Whatever the parallels, though, the case is bound to miscarry if we disregard the analogy that counts most, the source. Skeat identified the Latin at lines 152 and 157 of Passus XV as quoted from I Corinthians 13:4, 5, 12, but he troubled himself only for the isolated verse, and other commentators also have been unaware that the entire opening section of this Passus paraphrases that famous chapter on the "Charite that Poule preyseth best." To show the indebtedness we have but to set *Piers Plowman* and St. Paul side by side: the colloquy between the dreamer and Anima on the virtue of names, whose worth is so gaily scorned, echoes from the "tongues of men and of angels"; Wille's boastful desire to know "alle the sciences vnder sonne and alle the sotyle craftes" revokes the mood of him who said *si noverim mysteria omnia et omnem scientiam*; when Anima calls Charity "a childissh thinge," how great is the irony to one who thinks in reply *evacuavi quae erant parvuli*; and since the dreamer knows "ful charite" only in part, he must be taught a *Distinctio Caritatis* in the very terms and style of the Apostle.

In this framework the elements of the acrostic line become intelligible. "I haue lyued in londe" is equivalent to *factus sum vir*, a Pauline paradox beside Anima's quotation from

⁶ While I expect to go no further into problems of the C-Text, it must be observed that C rewrites the acrostic line as: "Ich haue lyued in London · meny longe 3eres"; nevertheless, C has elsewhere composed these lines independently:

'Ich am to waik to worche · with sykel other with sythe,
 And to *long*, leyf me · lowe for to stoupe,
 To worchen as a workeman · eny *whyle* (!) to dure.'
 'Thenne hauest thou *londe*s to *lyue* by?' · quath Reson.

C VI 23-26 (cp. C VII 66-67)

Now it cannot be admitted that C was so hypersubtle as to express a cipher here and suppress it there, hence the name "Wille Longelonde" was unfamiliar to him; but he, of all people, should have known who wrote B; *ergo*!

Matthew—*nisi efficiamini sicut parvuli*—and this claim to virtue may be one meaning of the name Longe Wille, understood by Manly as “implying long experience and observation.”⁷ It is certainly fitting that, like Charity, the dreamer and his soul, “a sotyl thinge,” be not puffed up—*non inflatur*. But what above all must be marked is the expression somewhat inadequately translated *Caritas patiens est* in the Vulgate of I Cor. 13:4, where the Greek has ἡ ἀγάπη μακροθυμεῖ, “Charity suffereth long.” With what more adequate cause than this biblical allusion does the name “Longe Wille”—*Longanima*—need to be justified? The poet evidently had access, through some commentary or moral treatise, to a reading such as Ambrose’s *Caritas magnanima est*, and his hero’s epithet thus means “Long Suffering” or “Great Desire”—on one occasion, indeed, Conscience addresses him as *Diu-perseverans*.⁸

From St. Paul, again, if no more ulterior motive be required, came the enigmatic mirror-symbol (l. 157) which provided, deliberately or not, the clue to read the conundrum backwards. But to give the puzzle a simple twist I have been withholding another *Piers Plowman* reference in which all the key-words of the pretended charade occur and the mirror besides:

I was rauissshed riȝt there · and Fortune me fette,
And into the *Londe* of *Longynge* · allone she me brouȝte
And in a myroure that hiȝt Mydlerd · she mad me to biholde.
· · · · ·
Concupiscencia-carnis · colled me aboute the nekke,
And seyde, ‘thow art ȝonge and ȝepe · and hast ȝeres ynowe,
For to *lyue longe* · and ladyes to louye;
And in this myroure thow myȝte se · myrthes ful manye,
That leden the wil to lykyng · al thi *lyf-tyme*.
The secounde seide the same · ‘I shal suwe thi *wille*
Til thow be a lorde and haue *londe* · leten the I nelle.’

B XI 6-8, 16-21

⁷ Cf Manly, *Modern Philology*, VII (1909), 97.

⁸ The best potential source to which I can refer at this moment is Rabanus Maurus, *Enarratio in Epist. I. ad Cor.*, Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, CXII, 120a; I have not explored commentaries of the fourteenth century. Compare also *in omni patientia et longanimitate cum gaudio*, Col. 1. 11. The name “Longe Wille” (cp *sidne sefan*, *Beowulf* 1726) is paralleled in Rolle’s *Our Daily Life*, where it is said of man that he “hightis himself Lang Life, as he might at his will dryue dead obake” (cf. C. Horstman, *Yorkshire Writers* [London, 1895], I, 137). For Conscience’s punning toast to Wille, “*Diu-perseverans*,” see B XIII 49. And it is hard to exclude “longe launde,” A XI 117.

Again the original is self-evident, for the three handmaids of Fortune are personified out of I John 2:16, and a reading of detailed autobiography from the passage would be absurd. Nevertheless, if we invert the "Longe Wille" line, consistency must force us also to turn "Londe of Longynge" around and thus to invent a second cryptic message. For who can believe that any poet would make so cunning a device of his name on one page and yet be blind to the same contrivance elsewhere? Indeed, if "Wille Longelonde" was our author, who can think him capable of ignoring any of this word-play? In the logic of necessity, by denying the ciphers we reduce Will (iam) Langland to non-existence or stupidity.

Few scholars, I gather, will favor the last choice, but several may now find better reason to decide with Manly that the misapprehension of an acrostic is to blame for the Langland pseudonym. Although Cargill's elaboration of that theory, and his identification of the culprit, cannot be accepted, the blunder thus presupposed is plausible enough, and the hypothesis leaves few serious difficulties behind.⁹ But though I share this opinion, it is somewhat reluctantly, in part *e nescio*, because I can perceive no sufficient cause for a "Londe of Longynge" inversion. The "Longe Wille" passage is the natural sequel to a controversy about names, and the dreamer at that moment is the opposite of what he calls himself—knowing *ex parte* he feigns perfection. Nowhere could a backhand signature be better passed off, but why repeat the gesture in a far worse place?

To be just, let us admit that this apparent lack of artistic motive may be a minor worry, since many quips in the poem seem pointless. And be it confessed, too, that the affirmative case for the "Longe Wille" charade has been pled with much less than its due force. Langland's advocates should realize that, as Exhibit A, potentially the writer's own testimony, the crucial line must be submitted as the first truth of evidence, and that they must support the acrostic or withdraw. No longer can there be talk of "a mere chance" or half-hearted defense.

And the affirmative argument, though poor indeed, is not

⁹ Cf. Oscar Cargill, "The Langland Myth," *PMLA*, L (1935), 36-56; on his rash association of the Dublin MS note with the "mansed preste of the marche of Ylonde" (B XX 220), cf. R. W. Chambers, *Man's Unconquerable Mind* (London, 1939), p. 99, n. 1.

negligible. The proof from precedent, that Cristine de Pisan and Rutebeuf, for instance, fashioned signatures in cipher, is but remotely material, and it may be charged in rebuttal that many supposed acrostics have fallen into discredit, e.g. the Cynewulf charade read into *Wulf and Eadwacer*.¹⁰ Too absolute, surely, is the dictum:

Piers Plowman belongs to a definite type of 'Vision' writing, the technique of which demands that, when 'Will' or 'Ralph' or 'Dante' is introduced as the author's name, we should accept it as such.¹¹

I cannot speak for the facts here, but the reasoning is probable only, and it is weakened by Chambers' own words: "Throughout *Piers Plowman*, we need to interpret *Piers Plowman* by *Piers Plowman*."¹² Far more relevant, therefore, are signs that our poet was fond of verbal conceits—to be noted in brief are numerous puns, the etymology of *deus*, the quibble on *via*¹³—and amused by the tricks to be played with a proper name, as in the jibe at Friar William Jordan in the line "I shal Iangle to this Iurdan · with his Iust wombe,"¹⁴ and with less guarantee the allusion to Alice Perrers in the A-Text: "Of the precioucest perre · that prince wered eucure."¹⁵ These

¹⁰ See Skeat's note to A II 12 and Bernard F. Huppé, "'Piers Plowman' and examples being admitted in evidence, a Longe Wille anagram hardly looks so strange, and we can perhaps say why the author did such petty things when we see that he wrote *Piers Plowman* for pleasure, even if trivial, and not for business solely.

¹⁰ Cf. G. P. Krapp and E. V. K. Dobbie, *The Exeter Book* (New York, 1936), p. lv; for *Zufallsakrosticha* and the like, see also F. Dornseiff, *Das Alphabet in Mystik und Magie* (Leipzig, 1922), p. 147.

¹¹ Chambers, *op cit*, p. 98.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 142.

¹³ See Skeat's "Index to Proper Names and Subjects," s.v. *Puns*; for *deus*, cf. B XII 289, and for *via*, cf. B XII 278.

¹⁴ Cf. B XIII 83, on which see M. E. Marcett, *Uhtred de Boldon, Friar William Jordan, and Piers Plowman* (New York, 1938), pp. 62-63; further, A. Gwynn, *Review of English Studies*, XIX (1943), 19-24.

the Norman Wars," *PMLA*, LIV (1939), 51; but that "perre" is a pun on Perrers seems to me extremely doubtful, for the line in A is substituted (from A XI 12) for a B passage that is full of hard words.

2

“A Songe of Solas”

In Passus XI the dreamer, wondering if he dare publish his visions, is assured by Lewte in maxims of policy that ecclesiastics alone are forbidden “tales to telle,” be they even known and true, whereas the law grants otherwise to laymen, who have only to avoid revelations of privacy:

Thinge that al the worlde wote · wherfore shuldestow spare
To reden it in retoryke · to arate dedly synne?

B XI 97-98

A rejoinder to this partisan counsel is blocked temporarily by Scripture, who skips on high to preach upon another text. Casual readers, then, unaware that Wille’s silence (or inaction) always means dissent, may conclude that his poem aims first at the reproof of vice. At worst this error mistakes the poet for a propagandist and his work for a tirade against economic evil; at best, if right can come of wrong, it makes him a curate busy with the *salus animarum*.¹⁶ The purpose, protest the moralists, at one with Lewte, is moral. But they are like the lady “that redde a lessoun ones, was *omnia probate*,” and never turned the leaf to *quod bonum est tenete*.

For the *culorum* of the clause is sung in Passus XII, where Ymaginatyf scolds the dreamer for meddling with “makynge” and bids him go chant the Psalter, there being books enough already, and friars aplenty, to teach men of Do-Wel. To this censure Wille now speaks his defense unimpeded:

I seigh wel he sayde me soth · and, somewhat me to excuse,
Seide, ‘Catoun confortd his sone · that, clerke though he were,
To solacen hym sum tyme · as I do when I make:

Interpone tuis interdum gaudia curis, etc.

And of holy men I herde, quod I · ‘how thei other-while
Pleyden, the parfiter to be · in many places.’ B XII 20-25

While the excuses of a faulty man do not provide us with his last intent, Wille’s pretexts here, without justifying him morally, at least account for the comedy he mingles with so much

¹⁶ Compare, on the one hand, Christopher Dawson, *Mediaeval Religion* (London, 1935), and on the other, Greta Hort, *Piers Plowman and Contemporary Religious Thought* (London, [1937?]).

8 THE LIFE AND DEATH OF LONGE WILLE

care. No doubt *gaudium* admits of degrees and kinds for lay and holy men, from burlesque to hosannas; but a due measure is hard to find, and Wille has misreckoned his own, for at last he must leave off "makynge" altogether. In his imperfect estimate, however, *Piers Plowman* was "a songe of solas," for comfort and inner personal gain, becoming the worship of God, and not for spreading the news of Do-Wel, "that al the worlde wote."

Whether this artistic license perfects the soul, and how much it allows of folly (including charades), these are questions which Ymaginatyf does not press. He is wise and charitable. Lewte's fault, and the moralizers', is the refusal both to see and to grant the right to *gaudium*: to them an epic or an anagram must be a political weapon or nothing.¹⁷ Nowadays read too seldom for joy and sport, however, *Piers Plowman* so abounds in vulgarity, sophisms, grimaces, and stunts of diction, that I fear Longe Wille often drops into *turpiloquio* and sings "a lay of sorwe."¹⁸ In this sad case, his comic enterprise has the value of suspense, ironically hindering his resolve. If the poem is peopled with fools, none is a greater than the hero himself, an ignoramus who rants of science and a watchful waker who dozes off at Mass. But even Piers blunders, too, at first, cannot get his plowing done, loses the way to Truth, is duped by a priest, and argues trifles. When a writer appeals to Cato's precept for such buffoonery, he should be permitted the small comfort of a few puns and cryptograms. In those mirror-written signatures there could be a touch of bravado, but if no men were proud, all works would be anonymous.

3

"I came to Vnite"

To dream of godliness is much, all agree, but one who seeks "parfyt charite" must do more than bear witness to his visions. It is hard even to enter upon the life eternal, and one man—*quidam princeps*, says Luke—unwilling to progress beyond the

¹⁷ E. g., Cargill turns "the Langland myth" into a cloak-and-dagger romance by supposing that the poet was afraid to sign the work even in a cipher.

¹⁸ Cf. B XIII 457.

mandates of the old law, turned sorrowfully away.¹⁹ Surpassing that prince by reason of baptism, Longe Wille has coveted apostasy, nevertheless, and "unholy of werkes" reverted to the wonders of a Fair Field whose worldly science dims his eyes to Holy Church. It is a remote and desolate starting-point *in medio umbre mortis*, "Vnder a brode banke · bi a bornes side," into whose waters he looks as the Psalmist of old.²⁰ Self-willed, misled by dialectic, railing at wealth yet fearful of poverty, a heretic and pseudo-hermit, he begins in near disgrace, possessed at most of an inquiring nature and with a mere impulse to restore his soul.

In such a plight the rich prince was instructed to obey the commandments negative and positive, to practice charity, and to follow Him who elsewhere said, *Si quis vult post me venire, abnegat semetipsum, et tollat crucem suam quotidie, et sequatur me* (Luke 9:23); in the words of the Psalmist, *Declina a malo et fac bonum, inquire pacem, et persequere eam* (Ps. 33:15).²¹ It was Longe Wille's destiny and joy to do these things. The first part of *Piers Plowman* is ascetic, given over to abnegation and the principles of righteousness; the second part is mystic, devoted to Charity and the Crucifixion; in the end, Conscience determines to

bicomme a pilgryme,
And walken as wyde · as al the worlde lasteth,
To seke Piers the Plowman.

The poem has often been called aimless, its course unpredictable even to the author, but sceptical readers troubled by this doubt should recollect what Christ said to another of their kind, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life."²² *Piers Plowman*, indeed, is simply as obvious as that: with fellow sinners the dreamer sets out on the Way to the Tower of Truth and the *Vita* inevitably follows.

¹⁹ Chambers, *op. cit.*, p. 124, observes this parallel but does not follow it through; cp. B XI 265

²⁰ Although the opening of *PPI* is "conventional" (compare the beginning of *The Parlement of the Thre Ages* and of *Wynnere and Wastoure*), its similarity to the twenty-third Psalm seems worth attention, esp. in view of the quotation by Piers, B VII 117.

²¹ This verse from the Psalms was made the foundation of a spiritual system by Alvarez de Paz (1560-1620), cf. P Pourrat, *La Spiritualité Chrétienne* (Paris, 1918 ff.), III, 328-36, but there is no decisive proof to connect it with Christ's words, and the triads may be variously adjusted.

²² Cf. John 14·6, which is quoted at B IX 159.

From these passages of Holy Writ, with I know not what admixture from Neo-Platonism and the Stoics, came the three-fold scheme of Christian spirituality which the work imitates: a Purgative stage, that of beginners (*εἰσαγομένοι, incipientes, servi*), or souls of good-will, who withdraw from vice and turn toward virtue; an Illuminative stage of fervent, tranquil souls (*μέσοι, proficientes, mercenarii*), who grow and are strengthened in Charity; and a Unitive stage in which the perfect (*τελείοι, perfecti, filii*), men of enlightened faith and saints dwelling in ecstasy, are one with the Will of God. An everyday commonplace of moral theology, systematized early by Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, St. John Climacus, and St. Maximus, this doctrine was preached and lived by St. Bernard, by Hugh and Richard of St. Victor, by Albertus Magnus, St. Thomas Aquinas, and St. Bonaventure, from all of whom, in turn, it was adopted by a host of English spirituals.²³ In the fourteenth century every literate mystic of Western Europe knew the triad by heart, and though it has since been refined by St. Theresa and St. John of the Cross, the classic outline today remains unchanged. For one like myself, ill informed in mysticism, to detail further its nature or history would be presumptuous; now, if ever, "there are bokes ynowe to telle men what Dowel is, Dobet and Dobest bothe"—to their pages the reader is humbly directed.

Among the evil mischances which have befallen *Piers Plowman*, however, it is hard to say which is more regrettable, that its modern critics have minimized this tradition or that historians of the Church have never appointed the work to a supreme place among narratives of the Christian life.²⁴ Even to the tyro there must appear at first glance a manifest kinship of pattern in the *Scala Paradisi* and *Piers Plowman*. To labor here the comparison with St. Bonaventure's *Incendium Amoris*, Rolle's *Fourme of Parfit Liuyng*, or Hilton's *Scala Perfectionis*,

²³ As guides to the thought and sources, other than Pourrat, I have relied chiefly on A. Sandreau, *La Vie d'Union à Dieu* (3^e éd., Angers, 1921), A. Tanqueray, *Précis de Théologie Ascétique et Mystique* (4^e éd., Paris, 1925), and Dom Cuthbert Butler, *Western Mysticism* (London, 1922).

²⁴ A move in this direction was begun by T. P. Dunning, *Piers Plowman: An Interpretation of the A-Text* (London, 1937), Chapter III (cf. especially pp. 173-74), which achieved neither a definition nor a division of the system in terms of the A- or the B-Text, and Father Dunning gave undue weight to the Wells-Coghill claim for a "Mixed" State as the climax of the poem.

would be premature, if not needless, like tabulating correspondences with the Spanish *Desiderius* or any other popularization of the genre. Equally useless now also would be another lengthy résumé of Wille's venturesome career, yet something may be gained by briefly harmonizing plot and doctrine:

Purgative Stage. The so-called *Visio* and the *Vita de Do-Wel*, ending at B XV 189, after the *Distinctio Caritatis*, when the dreamer cries, "By Cryst, I wolde that I knewe hym, no creature leuere." The dominant theme in the *Visio* is penitence, answering to the injunction *Declina a malo*, the main task being a renunciation of worldly goods (Lady Mede), developing later into the episode of the Active Man and the *Distinctio Paupertatis*. But it does not suffice that a beginner confess his sins and repent; necessary also is a leaning of the will to good works, as St. Thomas said: *Cuncta vitia non exhaustiuntur nisi per actus virtutum moralium*.²⁵

Illuminative Stage. The *Vita de Do-Bet*, ending with the renunciation of self, followed by Contrition and Confession, at B XX 212^a. The dreamer progresses through visions of the Tree of Charity, the Crucifixion, and Harrowing of Hell, meanwhile advancing in fervor—shown, e. g., in the summoning of Kytte and Kalotte to Mass—as well as in wisdom, by settling, e. g., the problem of the Righteous Heathen. Spiritual teaching admits that tranquil souls, far advanced, may be exceptionally endowed, and a crisis may be passed when Wille sings the *Veni, Creator Spiritus*, receiving thereupon the Gifts of Grace.

Unitive Stage. The *Vita de Do-Best*, beginning for the dreamer when he says, "I cam to Vnite," B XX 212^b, and ending with his final awakening, during which interim he maintains himself in steadfast faith and conscientiously resolves upon a pilgrimage in pursuit of Christ throughout the world. Thus Unity is attained only in the last Passus, just as St. John Climacus reaches this degree in the closing Gradus of the *Scala Paradisi*.

A minuter partitioning of the work, and some judgment of

²⁵ *Summa Theologica*, IIa-IIæ, q 181, a. 1; note also St. Augustine's words, *Bonum amando nos meliores efficitur*, quoted by Pourrat, *op. cit.*, II, 301, n. 4.

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its originality, can be effected when the poet's local school of spirituality becomes known,²⁶ but to this notice of plain affinities should be added two remarks and warnings.

In sum, the phrase "I cam to Vnite" means neither that Wille literally entered Holy Church, to which he belonged already, nor that he took up a monastic or solitary life. The term Unity has rather its mystical sense, aptly and fully illustrated in this quotation from Hilton's treatise *Of Angels' Song*:

Wyte þou wele þat þo ende & þe souerante of perfeccions standis in a verray oned of god & man saule be parfite charite. Þis oned þan is verraly made qwen þe myztes of þe saule ere reformed be þe grace to þe dygnite & þe state of þe fyrst condicione, þat is qwen þe mynde is stabild sadly, with-outyn chaungeynge and vagacion, in god & gastly thynges, and qwen þe reson is cherit fra alle werldly & fleschely behaldynges and fra alle bodili ymagynacions, fygures & fantasies of creatures & is illumyned be grace to behald god and gastly thynges, and qwen þe wyll & þe affeccion is purified & clensed fra alle fleschely, kyndely and werldly loue & is inflaumed with brennand lufe of þe haligast. Þis wondyrful oned may nouȝt be fulfilled parfityly, contynuelly, holyly in þis lyfe, for corrupcion of þe flesche, bot anly in þe blis of heuen.²⁷

Now someone has perhaps observed before, hence again I shall not labor the comparison, that the last two *Passus* of *Piers Plowman* display an allegorical machinery found also in *The Abbey of the Holy Ghost*, a tract composed for "all tho þat ne may noghte be bodyly in religyone, þat þay may be gostely."²⁸ A few critics, however, confusing rank and holiness have fancied a progression in *Piers Plowman* from Laity to Clergy to Episcopate. It is a naughty pretense, which the dreamer himself condemns. Henry W. Wells gave an unfaithful account of the poem when he claimed:

The repeated statement that Do Best is the episcopal life and the emphasis in *passus XIX-XX* upon the active virtues and the government of Unitas, or The Church (with mention also of the State), make Langland's conventional intention abundantly clear.²⁹

²⁶ For some notes and recent bibliography, cf. Morton W. Bloomfield, "Was William Langland a Benedictine Monk?" *Modern Language Quarterly*, IV (1934), 57-61. For my part, I am quite unimpressed by Bright's identification of the poet with "Willelmus de Colewell."

²⁷ Cf. C. Horstman, *Yorkshire Writers*, I, 175-76.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, I, 321.

²⁹ Cf. Henry W. Wells, "The Philosophy of *Piers Plowman*," *PMLA*, LIII (1938), 341.

No such repeated statement exists, and no such emphasis. On one occasion, Thought tries to persuade Longe Wille that Do-Bet "is ronne into Religioun" and Do-Best "bereth a bisschopes crosse," a bit of toadyism which Wille thinks disgusting:

Ac 3ete sauoureth me nou3t thi seggyng · I coueite to lerne
How Dowel, Dobet, and Dobest · don amonges the peple.
B VIII 108-09

As well believe that "*dominus* and kny3thode" lead to betterment, another sop of worldliness, which even Scripture repudiates:

Kynghod ne kny3thod · nau3t I can awayte,
Helpeth nou3t to heueneward · one heres ende.
B X 333-34

Nowhere appears the slightest hint that the hero, in prospect or condition, ever rose to orders or a see. He never becomes a priest, lay, "poor," or otherwise; never does his ecclesiastical grade alter one jot; at no time "bodyly in religyone," he persists throughout strictly a wandering minstrel, ever loath to reverence lords and ladies.³⁰ From beginning to end, the problems of the work are those of an ordinary Christian, to whom "gostely" perfection has never been universally denied.

Nor must the present argument, therefore, be confused with the interpretation of these Three Lives as Active, Contemplative, Mixed—a false and mischievous analogy which has stultified *Piers Plowman* criticism for twenty years.³¹ Both Action and Contemplation are paramount topics, rightly understood, but for their fusion as a Summum Bonum the poem offers no shred of evidence. Longe Wille is hampered by a disdain for the practical and speculative, his estimate of Haukyn the Actyf Man being no less harsh than his contempt for dialectic; only by thanking Anima for a defense of just, though pagan deeds, and by learning the lesson of *non plus sapere*, can he be made ready for pure mystical devotion. But to give the poem a

³⁰ Wells trims his own theory to pointlessness by agreeing to take Do-Best as a "figurative" bishop (*ibid.*, pp. 345-46), and Dunning, p. 173, distinguishes between "subjective" and "objective" states, whereas the poet attacks, I think, precisely this kind of hair-splitting.

³¹ Henry W. Wells, "The Construction of *Piers Plowman*," *PMLA*, XLIV (1929), 123-40.

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profane coloring, with words like "communal utility," obscuring contemplation with logic and law, as was Envy's wont,³² misunderstands both the morality and the dogma upon which the work reposes. True Christian Contemplation does not operate without the infusion of Divine Love and special Gifts of the Holy Ghost; it neither is nor presupposes either vision or a discursive activity of mind, but what it does require is stable virtue in the subject and his enlightenment by Grace.³³ For this reason, however extended may have been his active quest, Longe Wille can be said to attain the contemplative state only after B XIX 223, when the Paraclete "gaf eche man a grace to gye with hym-seluen." Together with certain extraordinary gifts, this prepares him for Do-Best, the perfect Contemplative Life of Unity. In the true *apex mentis* no expert in spirituality could admit an essential residue of business or episcopacy, hence even Wille's minor role of versifier must finally be suspended.³⁴

Devoid of a third *Vita Mixta*, however, the poem ends apparently with Contemplation as but a second degree to the positive Action of good works. This seeming unbalance, so upsetting to modern critics, has ever been a troublesome factor in Christian ethics, which sternly forbade the Epicurean Life of Enjoyment. Aware of the difficulty, the writer of *Piers Plowman*, C-Text, adopted another solution of the triad. The dreamer here, having been shown the Tree of Charity, inquires about its Fruits:

' 3e, syre,' ich seide, ' and sitthen · ther aren bote two lyues
That oure lorde a-loweth · as lered men ous techeth,
That is *Actiuo Uita* · and *Uita Contemplatiua*,
Whi groweth this frut in thre degrecs? ' · ' for a good skye,'
he seide;
' Her by-neothe ich may nyme · yf ich neode hadde,
Matrimonye, a moiste frut · that multiplieth the peple.
Thenne a-boue is a betere frut · ac bothe two ben goode,

³² Cf. B XX 272.

³³ In this statement I follow the gist of F. Cayré, *La Contemplation Augustinienne* (Paris, 1927), the diversity of modern views hardly affects our mediæval problem, see the same author's *Manual of Patrology*, trans. by H. Howitt (Paris, 1936-1940), II, 361-66.

³⁴ Not unwittingly derisive of Wille's dilemma are several thrusts at "mynstrals" and "disours," e. g. B Prol 33 ff., VI 52 ff., X 38-48, XIII 288 ff., 437-57, XV 367, XVI 172.

Wedewehode, more worthier · than wedlok, as in heuene.
 Thanne is Virginite, more vertuous · and fairest as in heuene,
 For that is euene with angeles · and angeles peer.'

C XIX 81-90

The passage demands further discussion, but let me close these remarks and warnings with a note of absurdity: If Do-Best were the Mixed Life, then Virginité would combine Matrimony and Widowhood.

4

Optimam Partem

In his British Academy Lecture for 1945, Nevill Coghill taxes the poet with "stumbling meditations . . . confusion of thoughts if not of thought . . . inconsequence," illustrating this reproof in terms of a fancied delay in the composition of the B-Text. Having bungled the *Visio* to a lame conclusion, says Coghill:

The poet then began to write a commentary and found himself forced into something more like a sequel for which a fresh wind of the imagination was needed. . . . By some grammarian's trick of thinking in him, the positive Do-Well suddenly sprang a comparative and a superlative upon him, Do-Better and Do-Best, matters for which, in 1362-3, he was perhaps not fully prepared.³⁵

Such a theory, it seems to me, deprives our author of both poetic finesse and average sophistication. I hurry past the fictional need for lapses of time if Longe Wille is to live long rather than die early, during which intervals, as it happens, he is all things but creatively frustrated.

Let us pause, however, to deny that a "verbal whim," for whose origination the poet should wait years and years, "became the thought upon which the whole revision was moulded." The principle of "degrees" is inherent in mystic teaching, and the "grammarian's trick" seems almost a cliché in Biblical commentaries on the *locus classicus* for discussions of the Active and Contemplative Lives, viz. Luke 10:42, which Hugh of St. Victor interprets thus:

Maria optimam partem elegit: Optimum dicitur excessu duorum.

³⁵ Nevill Coghill, *The Pardon of Piers Plowman*. 'Sir Israel Gollancz Memorial Lecture, British Academy, 1945.' From the Proceedings of the British Academy, Volume XXXI. (London, n. d.), p. 21

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Bona est castitas conjugalis; melior, continentia vidualis; optima, pudicitia virginalis.³⁶

Bernard of Clairvaux's treatment identifies the third life:

Sed consideremus, fratres, quemadmodum in hac domo nostra tria distribuerit ordinatio charitatis: Marthae administrationem, Mariae contemplationem, Lazari poenitentiam. Habet haec simul quaecunque perfecta est anima.³⁷

Even Skeat did not overlook Wycliffe's variant of the theme:

But men supposen over þis, þat Crist approveþ here þree lyves. Ðe first is good, as children lyven whanne þei ben cristened. Ðe secound liif is þe betere; and þis is clepid actif liif, whanne men travailen for woldli goodis and kepen hem in rihtwisesse. . . . Ðe þridde liif is þe beste, as Crist seiþ þat mai not lye. And þis is sumwhat here in erþe, but fulli in þe blisse of hevene.³⁸

Pope Innocent III has the same grammar and another substance:

Porro triplex est vita, sicut triplex est mors: Vita naturae, vita gratiae, vita gloriae. . . . Prima bona, secunda melior, tertia vero optima.³⁹

Typical of the doctrine of perfection, however, are these words from Rolle's *Ego dormio et cor meum vigilat*, a treatise whose very title should be an open invitation to every student of *Piers Plowman*:

When þou hase wele leued in þe ten comandementes of god & styfly put þe fra al dedely synnes, & payes god in þat degre: vmbethynk þe þat þou wil plesce god mare & do better with þi sawle, & becom perfyte: þan enters þou into þe toþer degre of lufe.⁴⁰

Future editors will no doubt multiply these examples, a by-product of my reading on another account, but they invalidate

³⁶ Cf. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, CLXXVII, 781b, and compare, in addition to the passage from the C-Text quoted above, B XI 245.

³⁷ Cf. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, CLXXXIII, 423b.

³⁸ See Skeat's notes to C XVI 194 and C XIX 84; for the quotation from Wycliffe, see the *Select English Works*, ed Thomas Arnold (London, 1869-71), I, 383-84.

³⁹ Cf. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, CCXVII, 496c.

⁴⁰ Cf. C. Horstman, *Yorkshire Writers*, I, 53; Hope Emily Allen, *English Writings of Richard Rolle* (Oxford, 1931), p. 64, ll. 114 ff. (see also the Notes, pp. 146 ff.).

forever all likelihood that the Do-Best triad " suddenly sprang " upon the poet after " a fresh wind of the imagination."

5

Dixit Insipiens

Toward a further proposal by H. W. Wells, seconded by Coghill, I am rather more sympathetic, likewise believing Piers to be somehow an assimilation of human nature to the Persons of the Trinity.⁴¹ So ominous are the heresies lying in wait, however, that I avoid the dogma regarding such an identification as *Petrus, id est, Christus*, which it is hard to reconcile with the line: " And thanne bigan Grace · to go with Piers Plowman." ⁴² Surely the theology is strange, however poetic may be the metaphor, which would make the Holy Ghost superior to the Son, and the Son to the Father, yet the author's preference seems more than allegorical. Neither God nor God-Man, the Piers of the *Visio*, I have said it before, is a ridiculous Adam-Moses, in whose characterization the poet shows immense daring and self-confidence.

Dunning has called this Piers " a model for laborers " and Dawson venerated his " honest husbandry," but was he not like the boor who excused himself once by saying, *Villam emi?* ⁴³

Quath Perkyn the plouman · ' bi seynt Peter of Rome,
I haue an half-acre to eryl · bi the heighe way;
Hadde I eryl this half-acre · and sowen it after,
I wolde wende with þow · and the way teche.' B VI 3-7

Perkyn, alas, having sinned by choice plows by command—an unpromising example—and why?

' 3e, I bihote the,' quod Hunger · ' or ellis the bible lieth;
Go to Genesis the gyaunt · the engendroure of vs alle:
" In sudore and swynke · thou shalt thi mete tilye,
And laboure for thi lyfode " · and so owre lorde hy3te.'
B VI 233-36

⁴¹ See especially Coghill, *op. cit.*, pp 30, 54.

⁴² Cf. B XV 206 and B XIX 208.

⁴³ In a vain effort to save Piers' face the C-reviser makes the innuendo even more glaring when he inserts a new personification of this text, cf. Luke 14: 18 and C VIII 292-308.

"To litel Latyn"

Undoubtedly many readers have already been trying to warn me that the C-Version omits the punning interchange and that, instead of the *dixit insipiens* line, the A-Text reads:

Quoniam literaturam non cognoui · mihte be thy teeme.⁵⁰

Others must apologize for C's feeble understanding, but it is for me to expose A's dim wit, then "*deleantur de libro viuentium* · I shulde nouȝte dele with hem."

The trinitarian dogma of an ABC textual procession, one of the sacred articles in the *Piers Plowman* creed, was propounded by Skeat and has such vast authority that to question it seems heresy and to refute it hopeless. Yet its first premise, that short works universally precede long, as the lay the epic, betrays a notion of literary craftsmanship which, if not outmoded, is not unchallenged.⁵¹ And it is supported by shaky historical reasoning, since A's failure to include the Belling of the Cat Episode, dating B after 1376, is thought to provide a *terminus ad quem* for A, whereas such a sign is altogether indeterminate if A be viewed in isolation; and to assert without further proof that B has added this Episode either begs the question or calls forth the retort *quod gratis asseritur gratis negatur*.⁵² Indeed, while the B-Text is deemed a rewriting of A, no demonstration of this process has ever been carried out at the level of words and phrases; although each body of MSS has been subjected independently to the standard tests of higher criticism—Knott probing A apart from B, Blackman probing B apart from A—no such methods, e. g. by a principle of *lectio durior*, have been applied in common to justify the claims of A's originality.⁵³ Comparisons of the texts by less exacting techniques—involv-

⁵⁰ For the "ironical subtlety" of this line, see Dunning, *op. cit.*, p. 152, n. 76.

⁵¹ Chambers was swayed by the analogy of the Thomas More MSS, but think what would happen, on the other hand, if Skeat's great-oaks-from-little-acorns-grow reasoning were employed upon the "Bad" Quartos of Shakespeare.

⁵² The absence of this Episode from A may be easily justified on another account, cf. n. 75 below.

⁵³ On the principle of *lectio durior*, cf. Chambers and Grattan, *MLR*, XXVI (1931), 30, to which exposition it may be added that, first of all, the *lectiones* need to be validated, e. g. *ploufote* at B VI 105 is less difficult than *plouhpote* at A VII 96, but is the latter a *lectio*?

ing the psychology of their author(s), the excellence of their artistry, the moral attitudes expressed (e. g. toward the friars)—have been plentiful, all following to some remote inconsequence the bias of their free assumption.⁵⁴ This scholarship then falls into self-destruction, each hypothesis so proved being as readily disproved—witness the metrical tests, the “lost leaf theory,” the charge that B misunderstands A, and, above all, the conflicting Langland biographies—every yea begetting a nay.

In studies where such prejudice can be avoided, however, a number of critics, from Wells to Gerould,⁵⁵ have spoken with growing conviction of an ideational and artistic integrity in the B-Text, which strikes us more and more as the product of a single intelligence acting upon a single inspiration. By establishing this unity, and by denying to A, as I now have, the status of a work which resolves its own inner problems, we make increasingly difficult a belief that the A-Version contains the entirety of its initial design; and to derive the fragment from the whole becomes a venture more tempting than ever. The paradox, to be sure, has same slight authority itself, as that of Richard Price, discoverer of A (though Skeat, and not he, so labeled it), who remarked, “In this the narrative is considerably shortened, many passages of a decidedly episodic cast . . . are wholly omitted.”⁵⁶ Yet the argument perhaps lost more than it gained from the advocacy of Gertrud Gornemann, who combined it with theses much less stable, e. g. on the kinship of A and C, without realizing the priority which B’s cohesiveness implies, and without disclosing the true principles of editorial change.⁵⁷ In most quarters her ideas have fared poorly, though Fehr and Björkman lent them favor, somewhat to the dismay of Chambers, who promised but never uttered

⁵⁴ E. g., see A. Gwynn, “The Date of the B-Text of *Piers Plowman*,” *RES*, XIX (1943), 1-24, where no account is taken of the possibility that, with respect to the friars, the contrast between A and B could be accidental.

⁵⁵ Though disagreeing with him in principle, I give Wells the credit of seeing first the orderliness in B which Gerould recently emphasises in “The Structural Integrity of *Piers Plowman B*,” *Studied in Philology*, XLV (1948), 60-75

⁵⁶ Cf. Samuel Moore, “Studies in *Piers the Plowman*,” *Modern Philology*, XI (1913), 185

⁵⁷ Cf. *Anglistische Forschungen*, Heft 48 (1916) “Zur Verfasserschaft und Entstehungsgeschichte von ‘*Piers the Plowman*’”; also published in part as *Inaugural-Dissertation*, Marburg, 1915.

full reply.⁵⁸ He answered, that is, with the stock complaint that her evidence came from Skeat's edition rather than from the manuscripts, as if Skeat's variants were not already the evidence for the accepted order. Even Chambers, however, indirectly conceded first rights to B by granting on another occasion:

There are many passages in the A-text which are puzzling, till the B-text explains them by showing us what was all along in the writer's mind. . . . If we read *Piers Plowman*, with no theories of single or multiple authorship, but trying simply to understand, we shall constantly find B explaining A.⁵⁹

While this asserts, in effect, that A makes nonsense, something few of us will believe, it does affirm a real dependence. Still other scholars, lacking publishable proofs, may have thought to themselves what Glunz stated openly, "Vielleicht enthält der B-Text die ursprüngliche Form des Gedichtes,"⁶⁰ for the possibility should occur to anyone not tricked by Skeat's alphabetical labels.

My own conjectures, it can be seen at once, are not a revival of the Gornemann hypothesis. About the C-Text I have no proposals whatever and no opinion, save that where its context sufficiently resembles that of A or B its readings may be of interest.⁶¹ The B-Text I reckon with Glunz as approximately the poet's original work, a conventional allegory in which autobiography has small part, the outcome of a sustained creative effort datable some time after 1376. The general uniformity of its MSS implies scribal respect for copy and a tradition close to home, although no extant MS seems perfect, collation with the other texts revealing flaws of diction and alliteration as well as signs that a few lines of the prototype have been omitted.⁶² The A-Text, I hold certain, is an abridgment for a

⁵⁸ Cf. Bloomfield, *op cit*, p. 222

⁵⁹ R. W. Chambers, *Man's Unconquerable Mind* (London, 1939), pp. 98, 141; B. Huppé also stresses "the difficulty of finding any evidence of B's failure to understand A," which can mean that B understands B, cf. *Speculum*, XXII (1947), 610.

⁶⁰ Hans Glunz, *Die Literaturästhetik des europäischen Mittelalters* (Bochum-Langendreer, 1937), p. 526, n. 208

⁶¹ *Vide supra*, n. 1, for E. T. Donaldson's Yale University monograph on the text and meaning of the C-Version.

⁶² Cf. Elsie Blackman, "Notes on the B-Text MSS. of *Piers Plowman*," *JEGP*, XVII (1918), 489-545; R. W. Chambers and J. H. G. Grattan, "The Text of

non-clerical audience by a redactor of the B-Version, who abandoned his project when the poem became too esoteric. Its MSS diverge widely, but the revision seems best preserved in MS T (the basis of the new EETS edition),⁶³ which matches the B-Text in hundreds of instances, often quite minute and by no probability the result of contamination, where Skeat's Vernon MS, an end-product of further popularizing, corrupts the original diction, alliteration, and meter.⁶⁴ Readers have been well-advised, therefore, to beware of MS V, which gives an altogether false impression of the gap separating the A-Version from B; indeed, we have felt almost banned from textual comment until MS T is made available *in extenso*, with all the critical apparatus. In the meantime we must operate with Skeat's materials, upon which rest the proofs (if any) of the traditional view, taking extra precaution against infirm readings.

My reasons for judging the short version an abridgement are not limited, of course, to the evidence of *lectiones variae*, and, before enlarging on the details, I would state the grounds of conclusion thus: (1) The Latin is handled in such a way that omissions by A are more likely than additions by B; (2) by the same token, strange words of Romance origin and odd turns of English expression are so handled that their avoidance by A is more likely than their introduction by B; and, finally, (3) many differences between the texts indicate that the writer of A has failed to comprehend the original.

The Latin in *Piers Plowman* has been several times investigated, chiefly to identify the sources, by scholars who appar-

'Piers Plowman,' *MLR*, XXVI (1931), 1-51. The strange thing about this last, other than its defensive falling back into the lines of Westcott and Hort, is the curiously minute, and it seems to me ill-advised, argument for 'doom' over 'din' (pp. 28-35). The pursuit of minutiae continues in Grattan's "The Text of *Piers Plowman*, Critical Lucubrations," *Studies in Philology*, XLIV (1947), 593-604. Appearing after this note was written, but containing nothing to bring me to a change of mind was George Kane's "'Piers Plowman': Problems and Methods of Editing the B-Text," *Modern Language Review*, XLIII (1948), 1-25.

⁶³ Cf. George R. Coffman, "The Present State of a Critical Edition of *Piers Plowman*," *Speculum*, XX (1945), 482-83.

⁶⁴ Thoroughly established by R. W. Chambers and J. H. G. Grattan, "The Text of 'Piers Plowman,' I The A-Text," *Modern Language Review*, IV (1909), 357-89. The dangers were already manifest: "It is difficult to avoid arguing in a circle" (p. 371); "we want an arbitrator" (p. 379). Their problem was not made easier by Thomas A. Knott, "An Essay Toward the Critical Text of the A-Version of 'Piers the Plowman,'" *Modern Philology*, XII (1915), 389-421.

ently agree with Skeat that the author multiplied "the number of Latin quotations by *seven*," this supposed change implying "some considerable time spent in study."⁶⁵ But this estimate is sheer fiction, A having actually about half of the Latin in corresponding sections of B and no profound distinction in quality or source being demonstrable. So heavy was Skeat's authority, nevertheless, that Sister Carmeline Sullivan could not rid herself of it even when the burden became intolerable. For instance, commenting on B VII 51: *Domine, quis habitabit in tabernaculo tuo, &c.* (Ps. 14:1), where A VIII 55 reads instead: *Qui facit hec. non mouebitur in eternum* (Ps. 14:5), she explained:

He [= B] merely directed his readers to the Psalm in which the appropriate verse for the text would be found, by quoting the first line of the Psalm, whereas in the A text he had quoted the verse itself. It is difficult to justify this alteration.⁶⁶

So very difficult, I would say, indeed, that quite the opposite, easily justified, alteration should be inferred, especially since A's Latin appears in MS H only.⁶⁷ While this example is hardly representative of the useful scholarship by Adams, Sullivan, and Hort, theirs cannot be called expert testimony on a point about which they never saw the need to take issue. In fact, a clear account of the relative quotients of Latinity in A and B is singularly lacking, and, full illustration being now impracticable, the reader is asked to verify for himself the following statement. Open Skeat's three-text edition to any page, from the beginning through Passus B X (A XI), and these conditions will prevail: If B interspaces Latin often, five or ten lines apart, everything for long stretches, both Latin and English, is absent from A.⁶⁸ More isolated quotations in B are dropped in

⁶⁵ Skeat, *op. cit.*, II, x. Cf. M. Ray Adams, "The Use of the Vulgate in *Piers Plowman*," *Studies in Philology*, XXIV (1927), 555-66; Sister Carmeline Sullivan, *The Latin Insertions and the Macaronic Verse in Piers Plowman* (Washington, 1932).

⁶⁶ Sullivan, *op. cit.*, p. 45, cp. also p. 25.

⁶⁷ Compare the handling of the same passage from the Psalms at B II 38, III 233

⁶⁸ I do not propose to exhaust the sources, and excluded from the next few notes are references discussed elsewhere in this paper; also ignored, of course, are variants which have the support of but one MS or group of MSS. Long omissions by A owing to the Latin are these: cf B III 299-349, V 263-303, 392-448, 485-516, VI 71-88. This principle, however, seems inadequate to account for A's loss of B V 129-87, the Confession of Wrath; but note well A V 80.

A if possible, especially Latin tag-lines not well secured to their nearby context;⁶⁹ but missing also from A are scores of English lines attached in B to quotations without which they would be obscure.⁷⁰ Quotations accompanied by translation in B—or by what might be passed off as such—are kept in A,⁷¹ while Latin untranslated in B, if hard to avoid, is sometimes cued in or independently paraphrased for A readers.⁷² Occasionally, the quotation in A differs from that in B or is lacking in B.⁷³ Macaronic lines are generally present in A, which eliminates, however, B's theorizing on points of Latin grammar, e.g. the glossing of *faciamus*.⁷⁴ In but one place does A apparently misrender the Latin, substituting English *red* 'counsel' for *reddere* (B V 475).

For eighty years we have been asked to believe what to me seems incredible, that the author first wrote a poem relatively free of Latinity, save for numerous macaronics, and that he (or someone else) later inserted scores of Latin quotations and hundreds of English lines to keep them company. Neither the specific difference nor the contingency can, I think, be doubted, for the Latin, though distinguishing the versions fundamentally, does not stand alone: the A-Text, Prologue

⁶⁹ Latin insertions omitted: B I 185, II 73, V 576, 612, VI 225, 228; note A's rewriting and omission owing to the Latin at B I 117, IV 120, IX 191.

⁷⁰ The Latin prompts A to omit: B I 29-33, 139, II 25-27, 29-38, IV 31-43, V 49-56, VI 47-51, 316-17, VII 61-62, IX 142-50, 177-83, X 26-31, 73-88, 110-12, 320-28, 337-41, 390-410, 428-41, 465-74.

⁷¹ A retains the following Latin lines, of which B gives a more or less passable rendering: B III 72, 95, 252, VII 111, 117 (?), VIII 91, IX 129, X 116 (?), 454. Not kept in A, however, are the following, which B does translate: B III 233-44, V 39, X 189.

⁷² A makes changes to facilitate comprehension of the Latin. B I 176, II 122, III 247, VI 252, VII 40, 137, VIII 22, IX 32.

⁷³ Excluding deviations in MS H (e.g. A VIII 55), the A-Text Latin differs from B's only at A XI 151 (cf B XVI 157) and in the sections dealt with below, n. 86. Additional Latin is also provided at A III 65 (brought over from A III 239) and A XI 303 (also in C and probably in the prototype of B).

⁷⁴ Concerning the macaronics, the main point of interest is A's unwillingness to cope with the catch-words at the beginning of the Confession of Sloth—*benedicite*; *pater-noster*; *ite*, *missa est*; *beatus vir* (*beati omnes*); *vigilate*; and *reddite*—this series (B V 395 ff.) being mutilated down to *vigilate*; a few lines thereafter, when the Latin becomes too plentiful, A cuts the Passus short, omitting B V 485-519. For the *faciamus* passage, cf. B IX 35. Both A XI 247 and B X 368-69 do the author an injustice. the opposition is between *harne* (*hurte*) and *slee*, i.e. "*non mecaberis ne sle nou3t*," adultery being a crime against one's neighbor; therefore, emend *Is* to *Ne* at B XI 369, and ignore A's inept cheville, "*is the kynde Englyssh*"; B has it right at XIX 443.

And alle that lakketh vs or lyeth vs · owre lorde techeth
vs to louye,

And nouȝt to greuen hem that greueth vs · god hymself
forbadde it,

Michi vindictam, et ego retribuam.

Forthi loke thow louye · as longe as thow durest,

For is no science vnder sonne · so souereyne for the soule.

B X 200-06

The theory now current would have us suppose that the author of B interpolated such passages, in order, one might say, to enhance his original, but for a color of rhetoric is the Latin the whole purpose and being underneath them? For the display of learning or versatility why would anyone adopt a ruse so laborious? I cannot imagine either that the author of the B-Text was so pedantic about details that he altered, e.g., "trespassours" to *transgressores* (B I 96), "fornicatours" to *fornicatores* (B II 180), "crede" to *credo* (B VI 92), or that the direction of change was from "And gretliche his gultus · biginneth to shewe" (A V 60) to "And carefullich *mea culpa* · he comseth to shewe" (B V 77). On the contrary, A has removed these minor Latinisms according to the same principle as that which, on a larger scale, made him delete the Latinized half of Avarice's confession (B V 263-303). A major instance of this concision, however, worth particular notice, is the Belling of the Cat Episode (B Prol 146 ff.), since it begins with ten lines of Latin, an indispensable proem without which the story itself would lose all point. No one would argue, I trust, that B inserted the Episode for the sake of that Latin.⁷⁵

In harmony with his first rule of abridgment, moreover, is A's avoidance of unfamiliar English words and phrases, typical being the elimination of the term *restitution* and the joke based upon it (B V 232-39). Since the A scribes carried this process to an extreme, it is still hard to identify the early changes of the redactor, but I offer a selection from the likely cases. The strange word or syntax now seen in B has forced A (1) to omit one or more lines: cf. B Prol 51 *tempred*, II 22 *bilowen*, 175

⁷⁵ On the Belling Episode and the dating of A based thereon, see two recent articles bearing the same title, "The Date of the B-Text of *Piers Plowman*," the one by A. Gwynn, *Review of English Studies*, XIX (1943), 1-24, and the other by J. A. W. Bennett, *Medium Aevum*, XII (1943), 55-64. In actuality, the Episode does occur, perhaps by contamination, in at least two A-Text MSS, i.e. Digby 145 and Harley 3594.

auoutrie and deuorses, III 267 *moebles and vnmoebles*, IV 62 *luft*, 124 *baiardes*, V 193 *chiueled*, 347 *gothely*, VII 42, *pledoures*, *plede*, X 144 *rathe*; or (2) to rephrase the sentence: cf. B I 112 *tyne*, 202 *leche of lyf*, II 39-41 *mansed*, *bizete*, *enchanted*, III 97 *blo askes*, IV 74 *wowed*, 119 *clerken coueistise*, VI 30 *prisounes*, VIII 63 *Wilde wildernesse*, X 314 *sotiled and ordeyned*, 384 *Maistres of Gods mercy*.⁷⁶ This list, which is meant to be tentative only, the reader can soon augment for himself, especially with examples of merely verbal replacement. To illustrate the principle I quote a passage from the two versions:

Many tyme this meteles · hath maked me to studye
Of that I seigh slepyng · if it so be myȝte,
And also for Peres the Plowman · ful pensyf in herte,
And which a pardoun Peres hadde · alle the peple to conforte,
And how the prest impugned it · with two propre wordes.
Ac I haue no sauoure in songewarie · for I se it ofte faille;
Catoun and canonistres · conseillete vs to leue,
To sette sadnesse in songewarie · for, *sompnia ne cures*.

B VII 143-50

Many tyme this metels · han made me to studie
For Pers loue, the plouhmon · ful pensyf in myn herte,
For that I sauh slepyng · ȝif hit so be mihte.
Bote Catoun construweth hit nay · an canonistres bothe,
And siggen bi hemseluē · *sompnia ne cures*.

A VIII 132-36

Here the words *impugned* and *propre* may have been one source of trouble, but the crucial phrases are those involving *songewarie*, and for the profit of its analogy I quote also the C-Text, which keeps pace with B for five lines, then lamely falls behind:

Ac men setten nat by songewarie · men seen hit ofte faille,
Caton counteth hit at nouht · and canonistres at lassc.

C X 302-03

Now it seems to me that the opposition of *sauoure in songewarie* and *sadnesse in songewarie* was too complex for the revisers, and I charge A no less than C with textual debasement.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Will it be pretended that B introduced these expressions for rhetorical embellishment? That "Langland" acquired them after "some considerable time spent in study?"

⁷⁷ Here the signs of rewriting seem to me decidedly editorial rather than scribal, for a complex of ideas is avoided.

Whether they failed to comprehend the original or chose to withhold its niceties from an audience deemed unappreciative, I shall not decide. Returning to the *dixit insipiens* line, however, I wonder how much they caught of its subtlety. A's uneasiness about that line may be traced, I think, to the words "deuynour in deuynyte," and their rejection obliged him to invent for *dixit insipiens* a longer Latin substitute—an English "teeme" being forbidden. That his line-filler neither alliterates nor puns should surprise nobody.

If I have shown no more than that the foregoing examples, Latin and English, are ambiguous, at least the necessity of an ABC ordering is destroyed, and even its probability vanishes with evidence that A has misconstrued the source. First in significance is an ancient textual error, where B has not gone astray:

For *morthereres* aren mony leches · lorde hem amende!
 Thei do men deye thorw here drynkes · ar destine it wolde.
 B VI 275-76

T' other versions have the same second line, but in the first they fall apart:

Ther beoth *my lyzers* then leches · vr lord hem amende!
 A VII 260

Ther aren *meny luthere leches* · and leele leches fewe.
 C IX 296

This is text enough for a long sermon indeed, but I cut it short with a question: If C's reading was original, what genius made the poet anticipate in *meny luthere* the spelling but not the patent meaning of B? What happened must rather have been that an original *morthereres* was misdivided as *mor thereres* or *mor there res*; then the redactors understood only the "more" and guessed at the rest.⁷⁸ On another occasion A mistook the sense and rewrote wildly: B I 150 has *plente of pees*, i. e., as context shows, 'plant of peace,' in which Skeat rightly sees an allusion to Isaiah 53:2, but the A-Text misreads as *playnt of pees* 'plaint of peace' and adds a bit of musical instruction:

⁷⁸ I suspect that the first element was originally *mo-*, with r-suspension; but I do not know what to make of B X 164 *luther* = A XI 120 *lyzeres* (om C).

30 THE LIFE AND DEATH OF LONGE WILLE

And eke the playnt of pees · preche it in thin harpe
 Ther thou art murie at thi mete · whon me biddeth the 3edde;
 For bi kuynde knowynge in herte · comseth ther a fitte.

A I 137-39

The last line corresponds to B I 163 and C II 162 save that A's *fitte* cannot be the source of their *myzte*.⁷⁹ Of a secondary nature, the numerous editorial changes downward may be typified in two examples—and first:

A ful *lethy* thinge it were 3if that loue nere. B X 184

Neore the loue that *lyhth* therinne · a *lewed* thinge hit weore.
 A XI 140

B's hard word *lethy* 'useless' must be the cause and not the effect of A's prosaic diction. Again, B VI 32 reads "go affaite the faucones," where *affaite* is a technical term precisely applied, yet A VI 34 has "fecche the hom faucuns," an obvious substitution. For my part, certainly, I cannot believe that an author called physicians "liars," wrote "plaint of peace," or began with *lyhth* and *fecche*, whereupon he (or someone else) arrived at the pat arrangements in the B-Text. Whether the following additional examples entail "errors" or "editorial changes" may never be certain, but I mention several places—a baker's dozen—where the A-redactor, it seems to me, has mismanaged his copy:

B I 141 Skeat abandons L's faulty *seest* for R's corrupt *sueth*, yet WO and his C-Text read *seeth* rightly. Translate "And thy soul sees that and says it in thy heart"—a casual allusion to the debate of the heart and the eye. A goes into error with *schendeth*!

B II 50 of *Mede*, at the end of the line, was badly caught by eye or ear, yielding *ich rede*, A II 33.

B II 173 *regystreres* 'registrars,' which B saddles with allegoric silver, are metamorphosed by A into *destreres* (*palfreyes* H).

B III 283 *his wille to fulfille*. Here B errs too, since C reads *hus bone to fulfyllle*, which suits the alliteration; but A rewrites entirely, changing *bone* 'boon' to *boun* 'bound.'

B IV 20 *Witty-wordes*. As elsewhere, A is misled by the personification: MS Vernon reads *swithe feole*, which is not much worse than *rytful* TU, but *wytful* D is a near miss.

⁷⁹ A's *fitte*, indeed, does not even make sense, and "preche it in thin harpe" is just plain silly.

B IV 26 *One Waryn Wisdom*. Again the allegory trips A up: V writes *on a wayn wyd*, "which gives no sense" (Skeat), but *unwary wisdom* T seems just as foolish. Note that A suppresses the *sire Waryn* of B IV 67, compounds the error at A IV 141, and omits the speech of "Waryn Wisdome," B IV 152 ff. Cf. *MLR*, XLII (1947), 7.

B V 17 *ze segges*. The A-Text has: *to men* V, *sent god* T, *seith god* U; compare *to syggen ous* in the C-Text. Confused have been the ME reflexes of OE *secg* 'man' and *secgan* 'say.'

B V 196 *tauny*. A-variants include: *toren* V, *tore* U, both picked up from B's next line (which A omits), and *broun* H, which suggests that A may once have had *tauny*. The A-Version, however, mangles the description of Avarice, missing the irony of B V 198.

B V 228 *so the ik*. A's degenerate *sothely* may be scribal.

B V 370 Here B omits an original line, C VIII 422: "He wax ashamed, that shrewe · and shrof hym also swithe," which A gets approximately right, perverting only the second part into "and schraped his eren" (A V 215)!

B VII 28 *do bote to brugges*. A-Text: *Beete brugges aboute*. Compare *of bothe* (B IX 204): *aboute* (A X 212).

B VII 52-55 The A-redactor failed to comprehend the allusion to the four elements, and if the B-Text is original, the less said about the author's comprehension the better—C cautiously omits.

B X 178 *compassed*. A-Text: *kende ferst* TH, *tau3te furst* V (sim. U), missing the technical sense altogether.

Scholars who maintain that B is a revision of A must assume the task of shortening this list, thereby proving that both versions are alike in textual detail. I imagine, however, that most students of *Piers Plowman* will rather multiply such instances as these, and that apparently minor deviations in the A-Text, like *hemsself* against *hem for siluer*, will turn out to be genuine errors.⁸⁰

Now it is perhaps still conventional to think, as Skeat did, that "a number of A passages were suppressed,"⁸¹ but the thought is illusory. For the most part, aside from Passus A XII, to which we are coming shortly, A's extra lines are transitional,

⁸⁰ Cf. B IV 29. What now seem to me inferior A readings are subject to correction by those who have access to the MSS or collations. The following B readings are chosen as test-cases: Prol 82 *poraille*, II 79 *prynces*, 177 *pryues*, III 22 *coppis*, 36 *mellud*, IV 160 *mansed*, V 305 *coupe*, 345 *vmuibile*, VI 29 *world*, 154 *wrath*, VII 116 *abweyne*, VIII 61 *to worthe*, IX 31 *schaft*, 157 *of tolde*, X 10 *sottes*, 195 *3eme*, 371 *lette*, 457 *cunnynge*.

⁸¹ The quotation comes from Wells' *Manual*, p. 247.

summary, or elucidative, of a kind natural to abridgment.⁸² In a few cases, rarer than one might expect, our B-Text itself seems to have skipped something good.⁸³ As matters stand, however, I have the burden of accounting for but two major sections peculiar to the A-Text. First, A X 50-126 (= B IX 56-106), of late the subject of searching analysis by Huppé, whose findings have only to be reversed, i.e. A begins uncertainly on drunkenness, self-control, and fear of God (50-81), then interpolates on the last a reflection of his own (85-95), and finally works his way back to the original—as Huppé chooses to put it, “lines 96-127 were not omitted in B . . . (they) were merely revised in B.”⁸⁴ Second, A XI 180-220 (= B X 231-331), of which ten lines in the middle are common to both texts (cf. A XI 201 ff.). With this passage Skeat’s edition shifts to MS T, since V stops at line 180, and T’s addition begins with a rehash of material already given before at A IX 69-87; subsequently, A XI 211-20 ineptly does service for a corresponding B passage, eliminated for obvious reasons, much Latin and a hard allusion.⁸⁵ It may be objected that both of these A-Text sections contain some Latin, even if the quotations they drop are far more numerous. Of the sixteen common-place Latin items which A thus introduces, I reply that eight are found elsewhere in B and one in C;⁸⁶ furthermore, I need

⁸² That it is not easy to distinguish A’s additions from B’s scribal omissions goes without saying, as also that lines found only in one MS or group of MSS may be ignored. The following are explanatory or transitional. A II 178-79, III 249, 280, IV 67, V 154, 248-49, 261, VIII 153-55, IX 46, 93, 95, X 25, 171, XI 28. In these the expression is diluted or periphrastic. A II 68-69, III 228-30, IV 141-43, VII 134-39, IX 102-03, XI 264-67. Worth noting, perhaps, are a few rustic interpolations or substitutions: A VI 128-29, VIII 13-19, 115

⁸³ About these three passages only do I feel secure in an opinion: A IV 10 and V 189, both also in the C-Text, and A XI 157^b-158, where B X 212^b is substituted on the model of 215^b

⁸⁴ Cf. Bernard F. Huppé, “A and B Texts of *Piers Plowman*,” *Speculum*, XXII (1947), 606 ff.

⁸⁵ The sole difficulty here is superficial. “Clergy, in A [XI 216-20],” says Huppé, *ibid.*, p. 612, “makes the foolish deduction that knights and earls are Dobest of all. This silly piece of chop-logic is properly removed from the speech of Clergy and given to Will [in B X 321].” The remover, on the contrary, was Skeat, who mis-punctuated A, where quotation marks should be placed after l. 215, before l. 216, and after l. 220. Note that in both A XI 228 and B X 345 it is Willic, not Clergy, who defends the “chop-logic.”

⁸⁶ Note these equations: A X 62 (= IX 8), X 86 (= B XII 13), X 108 (= C VI 42), XI 189 (= B XVIII 423), XI 193 (= B XIII 117), XI 219 (= B X 399); further, from the less drastically reworked passages that follow: A XI 229 (= B XI 119), XI 236 (= B XIII 125), XI 238 (= B X 199).

not insist that they are the work of the A-redactor, who was, be it said anyhow, at least more learned than witty. No doubt unsmilingly and for the benefit of the uncouth, it was he, nevertheless, who knocked out the treacherous lines:

To litel latyn thow lernedest · lede, ni thi ȝouthe;
Heu michi, quod sterilem duxi vitam iuuenilem!

B I 139

7

“Deth delt him a dent”

If not defective beforehand, most A-Text MSS call a halt when the original, in Passus B XI, winds ahead into a maze of Latin and macaronics which the redactor's methods cannot penetrate. At a point where the allegory enters the realm of *Concupiscencia carnis*, Lewte, Resoun, Ymagynatyf, and *Anima*, personages too recondite for the unschooled ear, our scrubby hero pulled up headlong in early career. However faulty, this version circulated a while in disrepair, some scribes perhaps sensibly copying only the *Visio*, although attempts were soon made to piece the fragment out respectably. One group of meddlers, call them the A-continuators, farced up a spurious Passus A XII, while another group spliced on instead the remainder of the C-Text, nobody, strange to say, ever choosing to conjoin A and B.⁸⁷

That the bulk of Passus A XII was compiled in imitation and reminiscence of other parts of the poem seems to me an inference so regular that I banish to a footnote the details of comparison.⁸⁸ Two problems then remain, and first, How much

⁸⁷ The absence of any MSS mixing A and B seems to me one hindrance to the theory advanced by Father Aubrey Gwynn, “The Date of the B-Text of *Piers Plowman*,” *RES*, XIX (1943), 1-24.

⁸⁸ The first incident (A XII 1-58), of leave-taking from Clergy and Scripture and departure for the lodging of Kynde Wit and Lyf, is patterned on the foregoing episode with Witte and Study. In each instance the wife scolds the husband for trafficking with the dreamer, the husband withdraws, and Wille pledges fealty to the lady, who sends him off to her cousin with allegorical instructions; note particularly the close resemblance between A XI 94 and XI 36, comparing also A III 184. The trend of thought is similar to Ymaginatyf's chiding of Wille in the B-Text, XI 401 ff. Skeat observed that the *omnia-probate* business is appropriated from B III 333 ff., that A XII 58 is identical with A Prol 62, and that the Latin of A XII 23 is at B XVIII 393.

The second incident (A XII 59-98), the encounter with Hunger and Feuere, is

of this ending did Iohan But make? Surely the twelve lines which Skeat refused to print in his three-text edition, although they begin, "And so bad," i. e. thus prayed Iohan But, clearly a reference to the antecedent line. Somewhat better motivated than informed, But has heard it alleged that the poem was written "By Iames and by Ierom · by Iop and by opere,"⁸⁹ for whom, knowing a mighty secret, he will not pray. That pious credit may no longer be withheld or misinvested, and not reluctant to share it, he pens for Wille a copybook apology and petition:

Wille [wiste] thurgh inwit · (thou wost wel the sothe!)
 That this speche was spedelich · and sped him wel faste,
 And wrouȝte that here is wryten · and other werkes bothe
 Of Peres the Plowman · and mechel puple also;
 And whan this werk was wrouȝt · ere Wille myȝte asprie,
 Deth delt him a dent · and drof him to the erthe,
 And is closed vnder clom · Crist haue his soule!

A XII 99-105

The rest of the Passus through line 98, apparently another makeshift ending, I cannot reckon But's or altogether disallow him on the existing evidence; however, if MS U, with lines 1-18 only, preserves a temporary state of the text, then But could be third among the A-continuator.

Whatever the decision on that inglorious point, it hardly affects our last problem, the meaning of "Deth delt him a dent." It seemed to me once as if But were speaking of the fictional Wille, victim of Death's messenger Fever, whom I recognize still as an intruder from Passus B XX. My notion was then that the last awakening in the B-Text symbolized the dreamer's death, through which alone he could achieve

contrived in partial recollection of B XX 80-104, 166 ff., where note especially the medical terminology. The role of Kynde there in respect to Lyf is badly remembered in A, whose Kynde Wit is *mal à propos* (cf. l 65). It is worth remarking that "fyrste ferly," l 59, implies a series not forthcoming; the continuator was unequal to his promise, but MS Ing patches things up in lines 73-76 by making two "ferlys" of one event. Skeat notes a few other correspondences, e g with A XII 60 compare B XI 59.

I doubt that But is responsible for all of this compilation, but the possibility was conceded by Chambers long ago, cf. *Modern Language Review*, VI (1911), 320.

⁸⁹ That is, by "Tom Dick, and Harry," as Miss Rickert supposed, *Modern Philology*, XI (1913), 107 ff.; more to be heeded than the Biblical reference of the names must be But's motive in naming them and himself.

perfection, as Wycliffe says, "fulli in þe blisse of hevene."⁹⁰ Although Longe Wille relates that "Deth drowgh niegh" (B XX 199), and among epic heroes the mortal statistics are appalling, it seems to me now that *Piers Plowman* was directed toward no such morbid period. The hero came to Unity, to be sure, with what looks like deathbed haste, but seen as a whole the poem preaches Christianity of this earth, as long as life and body endure. "I wil bicom a pilgryme," vows Conscience, "And walken as wyde as al the worlde lasteth"—a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, if you will, it is a thoroughly devout conclusion.⁹¹

What Iohan But thought happened in those "other werkes" is just as obscure as what he knew about Wille's surname, never forgetting his own. That he cribbed his best phrase, "medleþ of makyng," from B XII 16 does not make him a cunning intriguer. Wille's poetic fate is not But's worry anyhow: what must be justified is the selfmade postscript to a nameless scrap. Whether our William Ps.-Langland predeceased him or not—"Swouned and swelted · for sorwe of Dethes dyntes" (B XX 104)—But's ingenuous stratagem leaves doubtful, and one wishes somehow that, since he could say no more, he had heeded Ymaginatyf's injunction, *Philosophus esses, si tacuisses*. For nothing has come of his meddling save suspicion, and the twin paradoxes of a Wille who lived, yet never died, and a Langland who died, yet never lived.

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⁹⁰ See above, n 38. I made this point in a talk delivered at the Modern Language Association meeting in December, 1946 (cf. *PMLA*, LXI [1946], 1373).

⁹¹ Cf. E. J. Gwynn, "An Irish Penitential," *Ériu*, VII (1914), 155 § 6. "As for him who desires to reach the pitch of perfectness, he distributes all he has to the poor and needy and goes on a pilgrimage or lives in destitution in a communal church till he goes to heaven." See also Whitley Stokes, *Lives of Saints from the Book of Lismore* (Oxford, 1890), lines 698 ff., and, above all, Matthew 19: 29.

TRAGEDY IN SHAKESPEARE

By J. V. CUNNINGHAM

The point of this paper is that if we use *tragedy* in the sense in which Shakespeare used it the tragedy of *Hamlet*, for example, is the holocaust that concludes it, and the tragedy of Hamlet himself is his death.¹ This is the general point, but in the course of the discussion new interpretations are offered for *Comedy of Errors*, 1. 1. 64; *Troilus and Cressida*, 5. 2. 153, 155; *As You Like It*, 2. 7. 156; and *Richard III*, 3. 5. 8. The conclusions are stated in the final paragraph.

Tragedy or one of its derivatives occurs in twenty-four relevant passages in Shakespeare's works. The passages follow.²

A. Talbot in *1 Henry VI*:

Speak, Salisbury; at least, if thou canst speak.
How far'st thou, mirror of all martial men?
One of thy eyes and thy cheek's side struck off?
Accursed tower! Accursed fatal hand
That hath contriv'd this woful tragedy! 1. 4. 73-7

Tragedy is death in battle, the sudden and violent death of a notable person. It is woful. It is brought about by circumstances (*Accursed tower!*) and by a responsible agent (*Accursed fatal hand*).

B. Warwick to Winchester in *1 Henry VI*:

Behold, my Lord of Winchester, the Duke
Hath banish'd moody discontented fury,
As by his smoothed brows it doth appear.
Why look you still so stern and tragical?

3. 1. 122-5

¹ Theodore Spencer, *Death and Elizabethan Tragedy* (Cambridge, Mass., 1936), p. 232: "Death indeed *was* tragedy; a tragedy was a play which ended in death." But he doesn't really believe it, p. 237. "... for Shakespeare stands head and shoulders above his contemporaries largely because of his ability to describe character; we are so aware of the living reality of his figures that their deaths are much less revealing than their lives. His tragedies are not tragedies because their heroes die; though death is their inevitable conclusion, its very inevitability makes it less significant."

² *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed George Lyman Kittredge (Boston, 1936). The notions that appear in passages of dubious authenticity, e.g., in *1 Henry VI*, also appear in passages undoubtedly authentic.

Strong passion, discontent, disturbed emotion, sternness in the old sense of grim pitilessness: these are the marks of tragic atmosphere.

C. Gloucester in *2 Henry VI*:

I know their complot is to have my life;
And if my death might make this island happy
And prove the period of their tyranny,
I would expend it with all willingness.
But mine is made the prologue to their play;
For thousands more, that yet suspect no peril,
Will not conclude their plotted tragedy.

3. 1. 147-53

Tragedy is the consequence of political intrigue; it involves the destiny of the state; and it concludes with unexpected deaths. But the point of the prophecy in this instance is that here not even holocausts, or tragedy on tragedy, will conclude the plot.

D. Warwick and Queen Margaret over the dead body of Gloucester in *2 Henry VI*—the Queen speaks:

Then you belike suspect these noblemen
As guilty of Duke Humphrey's timeless death?

And Warwick:

Who finds the heifer dead, and bleeding fresh,
And sees fast-by a butcher with an axe,
But will suspect 'twas he that made the slaughter?
Who finds the partridge in the puttock's nest
But may imagine how the bird was dead,
Although the kite soar with unbloodied beak?
Even so suspicious is this tragedy.

3. 2. 186-94

Tragedy is "timeless death"; that is, untimely, violent, as in *Titus Andronicus* (I, below).

E. *2 Henry VI*, 4. 1. 4: the tragic atmosphere is of black night, melancholy, charnel. See the passage from *Lucrece* (W, below).

F. Warwick in *3 Henry VI*:

Why stand we like soft-hearted women here,
Wailing our losses whiles the foe doth rage,

And look upon, as if the tragedy
Were play'd in jest by counterfeiting actors.

2. 3. 25-8

There is in this passage, as in others in Shakespeare, that sophisticated treatment of illusion as reality which is the sign of a self-conscious art; it is a convention found, for example, in the later developments of the detective story, in which characters recurrently say, "If this were a detective story. . . ." But there is more here: drama is distinguished from actuality on the grounds that it involves emotional sympathy rather than active participation, and this sympathy with respect to deaths in battle (*tragedy*) is characterized as woe (*wailing*).

G. Henry VI to Richard in the Tower, 3 *Henry VI*:

Ah, kill me with thy weapon, not with words!
My breast can better brook thy dagger's point
Than can my ears that tragic history.

5. 6. 26-8

The tragic history is an account of the death of the young Prince Edward.

H. *Comedy of Errors*:

A league from Epidamnum had we sail'd
Before the always-wind-obeying deep
Gave any tragic instance of our harm.
But longer did we not retain much hope;
For what obscured light the heavens did grant
Did but convey unto our fearful minds
A doubtful warrant of immediate death . . .

1. 1. 62-8

Doubtful, here, is simply the English equivalent for the Latin poetic epithet *dubius*, and means practically "emotionally upsetting." *Instance* is a more interesting word; it is a term from medieval logic, and signifies primarily "an occurrence contrary to a general rule" (*Century Dictionary*, s. v., n, # 3; Aristotle, *Anal. Pr.*, 69a37; Albert the Great, *In II Pr. Anal.*, 7),³ although it also has the more general meanings of reason and example. But when Troilus in Shakespeare's play sees with his own eyes Cressida's act of infidelity and exclaims:

³ *Opera Omnia*, ed. Augustus Borgnet (Paris, 1890), I, 799.

Instance, O instance, strong as Pluto's gates . . .
 Instance, O instance, strong as heaven itself . . .
 5. 2. 153 and 155

he does not mean that this is just another instance of how Cressida acts. He means this is an overwhelming instance to the contrary, sufficient to invalidate his general view of her character. Again, *modern instances* in the famous line, "Full of wise saws and modern instances" (*As You Like It*, 2. 7. 156), does not mean "trivial examples," though this is the customary explanation. The line occurs in the set piece on the seven ages of man, of which the fifth is represented by the justice:

In fair round belly with good capon lin'd,
 With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
 Full of wise saws and modern instances . . .

Though *modern* can mean "trivial," its basic meaning is "opposite to or contrary to the ancient"; the idea of triviality is secondary and derived from the prestige of antiquity. But the justice is a typical figure, the stern old man, the praiser of times past. Hence he is full of wise maxims of conduct and of contemporary instances to the contrary, showing the degeneration of the times.

In the strict sense, then, an instance is an example which is sufficient to invalidate a universal proposition. Hence the passage from the *Comedy of Errors* means: the general tenor of our voyage had been pleasant and hopeful until a fact occurred that clearly implied the imminence of the contrary, of violent death or tragedy; there succeeded the tragic atmosphere, fear and emotional upset in anticipation of the tragic upshot.

I. *Titus Andronicus*, 2. 3. 265: "timeless tragedy" means murder, untimely death.

J. *Titus Andronicus*, 4. 1. 45-60: tragedy is rape and murder.

K. *Richard III*. "Enter Queen with her hair about her ears, Rivers and Dorset after her."

Queen. Ah, who shall hinder me to wail and weep,
 To chide my fortune, and torment myself?
 I'll join with black despair against my soul
 And to myself become an enemy.

Duchess of York. What means this scene of rude
impatience?

Queen. To make an act of tragic violence.
Edward, my lord, thy son, our king, is dead!

2. 2. 34-40

The nature of the act of tragic violence is defined in the preceding speech as sin (*And to myself become an enemy*), and specifically as the sin of despair. The characteristic act of despair is suicide. The act of tragic violence, then, is suicide.

L. Hastings in *Richard III*:

But I shall laugh at this a twelvemonth hence,
That they which brought me in my master's hate,
I live to look upon their tragedy.
Well, Catesby, ere a fortnight make me older,
I'll send some packing that yet think not on't.

3. 2. 57-61

Tragedy is violent unexpected death.

M. *Richard III*:

Richard. Come, cousin, canst thou quake and change
thy colour,
Murder thy breath in middle of a word,
And then again begin, and stop again,
As if thou wert distraught and mad with terror?

Buckingham. Tut, I can counterfeit the deep
tragedian,

Speak and look back, and pry on every side,
Tremble and start at wagging of a straw,
Intending deep suspicion. Ghastly looks
Are at my service, like enforced smiles;
And both are ready in their offices,
At any time to grace my stratagems.

3. 5. 1-11

Intend, like the derivative noun *intention*, is a term from medieval logic meaning "to signify," "to express by signs" (*Century Dictionary*, s. v., I. 5) as in *Lucrece*:

For then is Tarquin brought unto his bed,
Intending weariness with heavy sprite . . .

120-1

The deep tragedian, then, communicates fear, terror, suspicion. Furthermore, he is a hypocrite who proceeds by intrigue (*stratagems*). He is, in brief, Iago as well as Buckingham or

Richard, for Iago is the hypocritical intriguer, the personified engine of the tragic plot.

N. *Richard III*. "Enter old Queen Margaret":

So now prosperity begins to mellow
And drop into the rotten mouth of death.
Here in these confines slyly have I lurk'd
To watch the waning of mine enemies.
A dire induction am I witness to,
And will to France, hoping the consequence
Will prove as bitter, black, and tragical. 4. 4. 1-7

The preliminaries are dire—that is, the tragic atmosphere is one of fear—, and promise by the law of aesthetic congruity that the consequence will be bitter and black—that is, tragical. The principle of order that connects preliminaries and consequence is the waning of prosperity: the wheel of Fortune.

O. Queen Margaret in *Richard III*:

Thy Edward he is dead, that kill'd my Edward;
Thy other Edward dead, to quit my Edward;
Young York he is but boot, because both they
Match'd not the high perfection of my loss.
Thy Clarence he is dead that stabb'd my Edward,
And the beholders of this tragic play,
Th' adulterate Hastings, Rivers, Vaughan, Grey,
Untimely smother'd in their dusky graves. 4. 4. 63-70

Tragic in line 68 is the reading of the Quarto; the Folio reads *frantic*. The deaths of notable persons constitute the tragic, or frantic play.

P. *Midsummer's Night's Dream*:

Theseus. ' . . very tragical mirth.'
Merry and tragical? tedious and brief?
That is hot ice and wondrous strange snow . . .

Philostrate. And tragical, my noble lord, it is;
For Pyramus therein doth kill himself . . .

Theseus. . . . Marry, if he that writ it had played
Pyramus and hang'd himself in Thisby's garter,
it would have been a fine tragedy . . .

5. 1. 57-9; 66-7; 365-7

Tragedy and comedy are precise contraries. The distinguishing mark of tragedy is violent death, suicide.

Q. *2 Henry IV*:

Northumberland. Yea, this man's brow, like to a title-leaf,
Foretells the nature of a tragic volume.

1. 1. 60-1

The bearer of tragic tidings shows in his countenance the ravage of strong feeling; there is foreboding in the anticipation of tragic consequence.

R. The Archbishop of Canterbury in *Henry V*, 1. 2. 105-6, speaks of "Edward the Black Prince," whose warlike spirit "on the French ground play'd a tragedy" by slaughtering the French army.

S. *Hamlet*:

Polonius. The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral; scene individable or poem unlimited. Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light.

2. 2. 415-20

What is clearly inferrable from this passage is: 1) the dramatic genres of antiquity were recognized as applicable to the Elizabethan theatre; 2) the application broke down—at least at times—in practice; 3) the classical (Alexandrian-Roman) doctrine of *contaminatio*, the cross-breeding of genres, was invoked to take care of the difficulties in application, with the suggestion in the staggering of the compounds that the difficulties become considerable. It follows, then, that Shakespeare was acquainted with at least the outlines of traditional theory: that, for example, tragedy is heavy (*gravis*) and comedy light (*levis*).

T. *Hamlet*, 3. 2. 159: the Prologue to the play-within-a-play calls it a tragedy.

U. *Othello*, 5. 2. 363: the representative of the state speaks of the dead bodies of Desdemona and Othello as "the tragic loading of this bed."

V. *The Phoenix and Turtle*, 52: "the tragic scene" is the death of the phoenix and the dove.

W. Lucrece in the *Rape of Lucrece*:

'O comfort-killing Night, image of hell!
Dim register and notary of shame!
Black stage for tragedies and murders fell!
Vast sin-concealing chaos! nurse of blame!
Blind muffled bawd! dark harbour for defame!
Grim cave of death! whisp'ring conspirator
With close-tongu'd treason and the ravisher!'

764-70

This passage constitutes a congeries of the fundamental notions and attitudes associated with the concept of tragedy; its objective content is murder, death, whispering conspiracy, close-tongued treason, rape; it deals in sin—night, its symbol, is the image of Hell, where grace dies (*comfort-killing*) and chaos spreads, for chaos is the issue of sin as order is of grace; tragedy is preoccupied with fame (cf. *Hamlet*, 5. 2. 355-60); its atmosphere is dim, vast (that is, "disordered"), black, blind (that is, irrational"), dark, grim.

X. The lover in *A Lover's Complaint* is portrayed as a master of insincere rhetoric and capable of expressing all the external signs of the appropriate emotions:

To blush at speeches rank, to weep at woes,
Or to turn white and sound at tragic shows . . .

307-8

The effect of tragedy is fear or terror.

2

And now to sum up the Shakespearean conception of *tragedy*. The tragic atmosphere and the anticipation of the tragic catastrophe is fearful; the catastrophe woeful. The process by which the catastrophe comes about involves intrigue, hypocrisy, political conspiracy and treason, acts of sin, and is conducted by responsible agents. These are the connotations of *tragedy*. The denotation is violent, unexpected death—murder, death in battle, suicide. To these is added rape. This definition describes Shakespeare's own practice quite as adequately as do Aristotle's or Bradley's, and it has more authority.

This denotation of *tragedy*, however, is not merely Shakespearean; it is generally Elizabethan, as indeed is well known. Death in *Soliman and Perseda*, speaking as a chorus at the beginning of the play, says: "And what are tragedies but acts of death?" (1. 1. 7).⁴ And, again, at the conclusion:

Packer *Loue* and *Fortune*, play in comedies,
For powerfull Death best fitteth Tragedies.

In the Induction to *A Warning for Fair Women*, which was produced by Shakespeare's company, the characters are Tragedy, History, and Comedy. Tragedy is called "a common executioner," "murther's Beadle," "The common hangman unto Tyranny," and a little later it is remarked:

Then we shall have a tragedy indeed;
Pure purple buskin, blood and murther right.⁵
Induction, 6, 19, 20, 61-2

Finally, Fletcher in the preface to the *Faithful Shepherdess* distinguishes tragi-comedy from tragedy "in respect it wants deaths, which is enough to make it no tragedy. . . ."⁶ Hence death is the essential mark—note the technical language of "in respect that"—the defining characteristic.

The tragic fact is death. Even the most natural death has in it a radical violence, for it is a transition from this life to something by definition quite otherwise; and, however much it may be expected, it is in its moment of incidence sudden, for it comes as a thief in the night, you know not the day nor the hour. Hence the characteristics of suddenness and violence which are attached to death in tragedy may be viewed as only artistic heightenings of the essential character of death: the unnaturalness of the tragic event is only pointed and emphasized by the unnatural precipitancy of its accomplishment. If Elizabethan dramas often end in almost indiscriminate butchery, the intention, even if mistaken, is only to make them the more tragic.

That tragedy is death is a conception which will account for a puzzling feature in the history of Elizabethan drama: namely,

⁴ *The Works of Thomas Kyd*, ed. Frederick S. Boas (Oxford, 1901), p. 164

⁵ Ed. Richard Simpson, *The School of Shakespeare* (London, 1878), II, 241 ff

⁶ Ed. W. W. Greg in *The Works of Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher* ("Variorum edition": London, 1908), III, 18.

that we have a number of interesting plays, particularly those traditionally associated with Shakespeare's name, *Arden of Feversham*, *A Warning for Fair Women*, and the *Yorkshire Tragedy*, in which recent and actual murders are dramatized. These were regarded as tragedies; indeed one of them has the extensive Induction which was quoted from above, in which Tragedy after an argument with History and Comedy introduces the play. Nevertheless, in these plays the usual notion that tragedy involves a notable reversal of prosperity and the fall of a person from high estate to low is little attended to, though not unnoticed, and at the same time the corollary notion that the chief characters should be of princely, or at least of noble, rank is deliberately violated. These are domestic tragedies. The characters involved are usually of what we would call the middle class—they are normally gentlemen. The situation is sordid, not splendid.

It is obvious that such a play, if the principle of decorum is to be observed, must forgo the high style appropriate to traditional tragedy. It must forgo at the same time the splendor and universality of great events; it must temper its effect to the meanness of its theme. The advantage which such tragedy claims for itself in exchange for the advantages of traditional tragedy is that of unadorned truth—truth in the literal historical sense, and unadorned in the sense of unrhetorical, or lacking the high style. So Tragedy in *A Warning for Fair Women* introduces the sordid story of murder with these remarks:

My scene is London, native and your own.
I sigh to think my subject too well-known.
I am not feigned.

1. 86-8

I am not feigned. Again, the author of *Arden of Feversham*, invoking the age-old commonplace of simple truth as opposed to artful feigning, a commonplace that derives from the early Christian defense of the unliterary character of the New Testament and from the older classical commonplace of nature and art,⁷ concludes the play with these words:

Gentlemen, we hope youle pardon this naked Tragedy,
Wherein no filed points are foisted in

⁷ Edouard Norden, *Die Antike Kunstprosa* (2nd ed.; Leipzig, 1909), II, 516 ff.

To make it gracious to the eare or eye;
 For simple trueth is gracious enough,
 And needes no other points of glosing stuffe.⁸

Epilogue, 14-18

A *naked tragedy* is unrhetorical, lacking in ornament, a tragedy in other than high style. Perhaps one should remark that the play does have a good deal of Kydian ornament in it, but this is beside the point, being only another lamentable example of the gap between profession and practice.

To conclude: if violent death is the distinguishing mark of tragedy, and this seems to be Shakespeare's understanding of the term, it follows 1) that domestic tragedy is a legitimate species since it has the defining characteristic and the associated property of historical truth; 2) that high tragedy will by logical implication involve the fall of princes since the violent death of a high character is such a fall, but that this theme is not logically primitive, but derived; 3) that the tragic attitude will be the attitude toward death; 4) that the tragic effects will be those appropriate to violent death: fear, sorrow, and perhaps wonder at the suddenness and violence; and 5) that the effect of tragedy is consequently not infinitely subtle but quite obvious. If this account be correct many of the notions which we associate with tragedy are not to be found in Shakespeare. For example, on this account the tragedy of *Hamlet* is the holocaust which concludes it, and the tragedy of Hamlet himself is his death.

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⁸ Ed. C. F. Tucker-Brooke, *The Shakespeare Apocrypha* (Oxford, 1908), p. 35.

THE "PLAIN, EASY, AND FAMILIAR WAY": THE DIALOGUE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE, 1660-1725

By EUGENE R. PURPUS

1

At the end of the seventeenth century, Dryden prepared a biography for a projected edition of Lucian's writings and included a note on the *genre* in which Lucian worked, the dialogue:

I will not here take notice of the several kinds of dialogue, and the whole art of it, which would ask an entire volume to perform. This has been a work long wanted, and much desired, of which the ancients have not sufficiently informed us, and I question whether any man now living can treat it accurately.¹

This perceptive and prophetic comment is still valid, for even now there is no satisfactory account of the growth and development of the dialogue.²

Probably no one person could carry out adequately the vast task for which Dryden expressed a need: "a notice of the several kinds of dialogue, and the whole art of it." The native English tradition alone offers a formidable body of material for study. The present discussion focuses attention upon the dialogue in the relatively short period between 1660 and 1725, a period which has interest for two special reasons: it is one in which the dialogue has been almost universally ignored, and it is a period in which (as Dryden was fully aware) the dialogue was exceptionally popular. I am here concerned only with (1) a definition of the dialogue in terms of both practice and

¹ *The Works of Lucian* (1711), I 45. Unless otherwise indicated, the place of publication is London.

² Rudolf Hirzel's *Der Dialog. ein Literaturhistorischer Versuch* (Leipzig, 1895) includes virtually no discussion of the form after 1700. A short doctoral dissertation by Elizabeth Merrill (*The Dialogue in English Literature* [New York, 1911]) contains only the barest reference to the period between medieval times and the nineteenth century—with the exception of a brief discussion of some of the dialogues of the greatest eighteenth-century philosophers. Very few other scholars have even mentioned the *genre* in English; and the great bulk of a vigorous native tradition in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries has gone virtually unnoticed.

theory in the period, and (2) a résumé of the reputation of the *genre* among critics and literary theorists of the period.

2

An account of what "the dialogue" meant in the Restoration and early eighteenth century must take into consideration the types of work to which the name was applied; contemporary definitions of the term; and discussions of the style, aim, method, and subject matter which characterized or were best suited to the dialogue. These criteria also afford a basis for understanding the contemporary popularity of the form.³

Some of the contemporary attempts at definition were extremely general. One writer asked, "What is the meaning of a Dialogue, but to represent two Persons talking together?"⁴ And another defined the *genre* simply as "A private Conversation, as it was originally in the planting of the Gospel."⁵ A more formal definition was that of Thomas Stanley:

A dialogue is composed of questions and answers Philosophical or Political, aptly expressing the Characters of those persons that are the speakers in an elegant Stile; Dialectick is the Art of Discourse, whereby we confirm or confute anything by Questions and Answers of the Disputants. Of Platonick discourse there are two kinds, Hyphegetick and Exegetick. . . . We know there are other divisions of Dialogues; as into Dramatick Narrative mixt: But that division is more proper to Tragedy than to Philosophy.⁶

Such definitions do little to limit what could be called a dialogue. Anything which represented the conversation of two or more persons, or which presented even as much as a question-and-answer type of organization, could be and was called a dialogue. But though the scope of what might be included under the general heading *dialogue* was almost unlimited, writers of the period recognized certain fundamental characteristics of the *genre*.

There was almost unanimous agreement that the style of dialogue writing should be "plain, easy, and familiar." Plato

³ Most of the material for this article has been drawn from my unpublished doctoral dissertation, *The Dialogue in English Literature, 1660-1725* (University of California at Los Angeles, 1943)

⁴ William Sherlock, *An Answer to a Scandalous Pamphlet* (1677), Preface.

⁵ Henry Neville, *Plato Redivivus* (1681), p. 11.

⁶ *The History of Philosophy* (3rd edition, 1701), pp. 174-75.

was praised because he "ever writ these high matters in easie and familiar dialogues";⁷ and the classical dialogue writers in general were held up as models for their "free and familiar style."⁸ The *genre* was often lauded for its "free easie and light way of Writing";⁹ for the "loose and free" language and the "easy and natural" transitions;¹⁰ for the "familiarity of the words and expressions."¹¹ Throughout the period, such references were constantly made to the style of the dialogue, and they indicate a major attraction of the *genre*; but this criterion of the plain, easy, and familiar style alone would exclude very large numbers of works which were presented to the public as dialogues. Many of them were more closely allied with a question-and-answer box or a didactic catechism than with a realistic conversation between credible human beings.¹² In addition, many self-styled dialogue writers made no attempt at creating conversation or characters; they simply used Q and A to indicate that the work was really a series of questions and answers,¹³ or they used names to identify speakers but made no further attempt at characterization.¹⁴

Another criterion for "true" dialogue writing was an insistence upon at least partially dramatic realism. Yet the term *dialogue* was used to identify works in which unreal or unbelievable characters (or real people in unrecognizable guise) held conversations that were illogically manipulated, incredible, contrived, and artificial.¹⁵ Naturally this weakness was deplored by serious analysts of the "rules" of the *genre*:

⁷ "Publisher to the Reader," *Plato Redivivus*, sig. A7r.

⁸ Anthony Ashley Cooper, *Characteristicks* (Basil, 1790), 1 60

⁹ *Animadversions on Mr Congreve's late Answer* (1698), sig. A7r

¹⁰ "Life of Erasmus," prefixed to *Twenty two Select Colloquies out of Erasmus . . . with the life of the author. By Mr Tho. Brown* (1725), sig. B1

¹¹ *Plato Redivivus*, sig. A7v. See also *The Rehearsal or a View of the Times* (1708), p. 4.

¹² This charge can be directed not only against the numerous broadsides of the time, but also against serious works of considerable length, such as Hobbes' *Behemoth*, *Decameron Physiologicum*, and *Seven Philosophical Problems*.

¹³ A typical criticism of such lifeless writing is that of William Nichols in *A Conference with a Theist* (1723), pp. viii-ix.

¹⁴ Some authors apparently feared that a too-sharp delineation of character might lead the reader to seek parallels in real life. For example, see Jeremy Collier's admonition that "Here are no particular Characters attempted, nor is there the least Intention to provoke or expose any Person Living" ("To the Reader," *Of Pride*, one of the four dialogues which make up the bulk of *Miscellanies in Five Essays* [1694], sig. A2r).

¹⁵ This fault is characteristic of a very large group of dialogues which were

If we will deal honestly, we must make neither of them [the speakers] say that, which we know, they would not say, if they were present: we may charge any man with the ill consequences of his Doctrine, but we must not make him own them, unless he pleases; at this rate of writing Dialogues, I could quickly make T[homas] Danson appear the greatest Fop in nature. . . . He who will observe the rules of Dialogues, ought not to bring in two persons talking together, who can never be supposed to do so.¹⁶

Most critics recognized that the inherent dramatic quality which is one of the most compelling traits of the dialogue¹⁷ is lost if the writer falls into either of two pitfalls: (1) if he substitutes invective, prejudice, and railing for a realistic conversation presenting a logical conflict in the search for truth; or (2) if the author's own interests are so obvious that his dialogue appears contrived to reflect his partiality. In an analysis of "the Rules of Dialogue," James Tyrrell complained of both of these misuses:

Whether I have truly pursued the Rules of Dialogue, must be left to the Reader's Judgment; but I can justly affirm that I have carefully avoided all bitter and reflecting Language on either side, having design'd these Discourses for *Common Places of Argument*, and not Forms of Railing. I have also declin'd shewing my self a Party, or giving my own Opinion in any Question, and therefore have not made either of my Disputants the other's Convert; tho nothing is more easy in writing Dialogues as well as Romances, than to make the Knight-Errant always beat the Giant.¹⁸

To give at least the impression of a disinterested searching after truth, many writers assured the reader of their impartiality.

represented as being "conferences"; e g., William Lloyd, *A Conference between two Protestants and a Papist* (1673); Simon Patrick, *A Friendly Debate Between a Conformist and a Nonconformist* (5th edition, 1669); Thomas Danson, *The Quaker's Folly* (2nd edition, 1659); William Nichols, *A Conference with a Theist*.

¹⁶ *An Answer to a Scandalous Pamphlet*, Preface

¹⁷ A later writer of dialogues, George Lyttelton, explained in a matter-of-fact way the dramatic appeal of the form: "The Plan I have followed . . . is, perhaps, one of the most agreeable Methods, that can be employed, of conveying to the Mind any Critical, Moral, or Political Observations; because the Dramatic Spirit, which may be thrown into them, gives them more Life, than they could have in Dissertations, however well written" (*Dialogues of the Dead* [1760], p. iv).

¹⁸ *Bibliotheca Politica: or an Enquiry into the Antient Constitution of the English Government*. . . In *Fourteen Dialogues* (1718), p. iv. For a conspicuous example of the setting up of "straw men" in political discussions, see Charles Davenant's popular dialogues *The True Picture of a Modern Whig* (1701) and *Tom Double Return'd out of the Country* (1702).

For example, one author explained his technique by saying, "One Reason for which I've introduced Trimmer for Moderator, is to stave and Tail between the two furious Combatants, when villanously fasten'd together and lugging one anothers Throats out."¹⁹ Perhaps the best contemporary statement of the potential (and desirable) impartiality which is ideally one of the greatest assets of dialogue writing is Dryden's commentary upon his method in *An Essay of Dramatic Poesie*:

In vindication of myself, I must crave leave to say, that my whole discourse was sceptical, according to that way of reasoning which was used by Socrates, Plato, and all the Academics of old, which Tully and the best of the Ancients followed, and which is imitated by the modest inquisitions of the Royal Society. . . .²⁰

You see, it is a dialogue sustained by persons of several opinions, all of them left doubtful, to be determined by the readers in general; and more particularly deferred to the accurate judgment of my Lord Buckhurst. . . .²¹

Unfortunately, contemporary theories of the high aim and impartial method of dialogue writing were not often enough carried out in practice.²² Hundreds of dialogue writers were less concerned with the use of the dialogue for idealistic truth-seeking than they were with exploiting the form as an easy and popular way of expressing their own opinions.

But if there were those who made of the dialogue a mere catechism or a biased vehicle for fighting "straw men," there were others who erred on the side of too much characterization or too much dramatic background.²³ This weakness inspired

¹⁹ *A Modest Attempt for healing the present Animosities in England* (1690), p. 4.

²⁰ As Dryden here notes, the style which was consistently commented upon as a characteristic of the dialogue was closely related to the ideals of style of the Royal Society and of those who were anti-Ciceronians. As he also notes, the specific traits of dialogue writing which were most often praised were those which it shared with the sceptical mode of thought. I hope to discuss these special subjects in an early article.

²¹ *The Essays of John Dryden*, ed. W. P. Ker (Oxford, 1900), I 124-25. This desire for impartiality is well satisfied in works such as Francis Gastrell's *The Principles of Deism truly represented* (1708); and, of course, that aim is the basis for the title of John Dennis' *The Impartial Critick*.

²² For example, few readers at any time would be misled by the comment of Roger L'Estrange that "To give the Reader a Clear, Distinct, and Impartial Prospect of the Matter, I have layd the Debate before him in a Colloquy," a remark which prefaces the author's typically partisan views in *Toleration Discussed* (1663), sig. A3v.

²³ Many of the works which carried a large identification of themselves as

Addison's comment, "There is so much time taken up with ceremony, that before they enter on their subject, the Dialogue is half ended."²⁴ Addison himself supplied an example of what the dialogue writer ought to do to divest himself of trappings which properly did not belong to the form:

To avoid the fault I have found in others, I shall not trouble myself nor my Reader with the first salutes of our three friends, nor with any part of their discourse over the Tea-Table. We will suppose the China dishes taken off, and a Drawer of Medals supplying their room.²⁵

But the need for background and characterization was a minor price to pay for the popular appeal and the general effectiveness of the dialogue. James Tyrrell expressed a common view when he wrote, "Matters of Form in Dialogues are more tedious, yet the Reader, as well as Traveller, will find that the Pleasantness of the Road often makes amends for its being somewhat about."²⁶

From the foregoing discussion it should be apparent that the term *dialogue* was used to cover a great variety of works in this period. The word was used to designate publications which ranged from completely undramatic half sheets of questions and answers to elaborate conversations in which characters were fully developed, action was clearly indicated, and background was carefully drawn.²⁷ But even a brief outline of

dialogues were in reality drolls, skits, moralities, and comedies with all the trappings of a printed play. Cf. particularly *Youth's Tragedy* (1671); Benjamin Keach, *War with the Devil* (1673); *The Head of Nile* (1681); *The Wits, or Sport Upon Sport* (1671); *The Cabal of Romish Ghosts* (1680); George Lesly, *Divine Dialogues* (1676); Roger L'Estrange, *Dialogue Upon Dialogue* (1681). The relation between the dialogue and stage plays is pointed out in many of the dialogues directed against Jeremy Collier in 1699; e. g., James Wright, *Historia Histrionica*, and John Oldmixon, *Reflections on the Stage*. One attack upon Collier recalls his own earlier writing of dialogues (*Miscellanies in Five Essays*) and argues, "Now if it be lawful to write and read in Dialogue, with the true force and energy of the expression, why is it more unlawful to add the true life and lustre of action to it?" (*The Stage Acquitted* [1699], p. 1.)

²⁴ *Dialogues upon the usefulness of Ancient Medals* (1726), p. 35.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Bibliotheca Politica* (1718), p. iv.

²⁷ A list of only the most important long dialogues in which characters and action were given at least partially dramatic development must include Dryden's *An Essay of Dramatic Poesie*, Walton's *The Compleat Angler*, Berkeley's *Three Dialogues* and *Alciphron*, Shaftesbury's *The Moralists*, Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*, Henry More's *Divine Dialogues*, Addison's *Medals*, Bunyan's *Life and Death*

representative contemporary concepts of the dialogue offers a basis for a broad definition of what the Restoration and early eighteenth-century writers thought to be "the dialogue." It is a form of expository writing, commonly in a plain and familiar style, presented entirely through the conversation of two or more persons, dramatic only to the extent of attempting to present an impression of the talk of real people, and aimed at the communication of information or points of view through the interplay of arguments on more than one side of the issue at hand. That such a definition will not suffice to cover *all* examples of what were called dialogues is as obvious as that no one definition could easily encompass all of what today passes under the heading of short story.

3

In the middle of the eighteenth century, David Hume wrote in a prefatory note to his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* that "though the ancient philosophers conveyed most of their instruction in the form of dialogue, this method of composition has been little practiced in later ages, and has seldom succeeded in the hands of those who have attempted it."²⁸ Bishop Hurd shared this point of view:

We have what are called Dialogues in abundance; and the authors, for any thing I know, might please themselves with imagining, they had copied Plato or Cicero. But in our language, at least (and, if I extended the observation to the other modern ones of most estimation, I should perhaps do them no wrong) I know of nothing in the way of Dialogue that deserves to be considered by us with such regard. There are in English Three Dialogues, and but Three, that are fit to be mentioned on this occasion; all of them excellently well composed in their way, and, it must be owned, by the very best and politest of our writers. . . . The Dialogues I mean are, *The Moralists* of Lord Shaftesbury; Mr. Addison's *Treatise on Medals*; and the *Minute Philosopher* of Bishop Berkeley.²⁹

of Mr. Badman and parts of *Pilgrim's Progress*, and John Dennis' *The Impartial Critick*.

²⁸ Ed. Norman Kemp Smith (Oxford, 1935), p. 157

²⁹ *Moral and Political Dialogues* (1776), I xx-xxi. It must be noted that neither Hume nor Hurd was entirely without personal bias; each was attempting to convince the public that he was the first English writer worthy to be considered as an imitator of Plato.

It is exactly this aim of testing whether or not English dialogue writers "had copied Plato or Cicero" which has led most critics and historians to ignore the real development and reputation of the dialogue in English. If, like Hume and Hurd, one is searching for works comparable to the dialogues of Plato, these comments have a certain justice. But if one is interested in the growth and development of the dialogue in English literature, nothing could be farther from the truth. Certainly if one studies the critics and theorists of the Restoration and early eighteenth century he will find a vastly higher estimate not only of the form but also of its contemporary use.

Partial evidence of the reputation of the dialogue can be seen in the sheer bulk of dialogues published.³⁰ Further evidence may be gained from noting the large number of dialogue writers.³¹ A list of merely the most prolific and best known includes such writers as Hobbes, Boyle, Fontenelle, Shaftesbury, Mandeville, Berkeley, Prior, Marvell, Henry More, Bunyan, Richard Baxter, Addison, Dryden, Pope, Charles Gildon, Charles Cotton, James Wright, John Dennis, Ned Ward, John Oldmixon, Thomas Brown, William King, Jeremy Collier, Isaac Walton, Roger L'Estrange, William Walsh, Ambrose Philips, and John Gay.³²

³⁰ In my study of the form during this period, I have examined nearly two thousand dialogues. The vast quantity of dialogues is suggested in part by a contemporary writer upon a single kind of dialogue, dialogues of the dead. "We have had so many arise from the dead of late; that they are grown familiar, and almost contemptible" (*A Dialogue betwixt H.B's Ghost, and his Dear Author, R. L. S.* [1681?]). The extent to which dialogue monopolized periodicals is indicated by W. P. Trent's observation that "Defoe's chief contribution to journalism at this period is to be found in his abandonment of the dialogue form and of the partisan tone of his predecessors and immediate contemporaries" (*Cambridge History of English Literature* [Cambridge, 1939], 9 6).

³¹ That many writers of the time had experience in writing dialogues after the fashion of Lucian is evidenced by the list of contributors to the edition for which Dryden wrote the *Life*. The "Men of establish'd Reputation, both for Wit, and Learning . . ." included many of the most prolific writers of dialogues: "Thomas Brown, Charles Blount, T. Ferne, Walter Moyle, Sir Henry Sheers, Andrew Baden, Dr. Drake, S. Cob, Charles Gildon, Mr. Cashen, Mr. Vernon, Captain Sprag, Mr. Hill, S. Atkinson, Henry Blount, Captain Ayloffe, John Phillips, Lawrence Eachard, George Eachard, Mr. Savage, John Digby, Hon. Hugh Hare, J. Washington, Nahum Tate, James Tyrrell" (Lucian's *Works*, 1711 edition).

³² The writers whose names appeared most frequently in *The Term Catalogues* are (in order of their quantitative importance) Richard Baxter, Roger L'Estrange, Edward Stillingfleet, Robert Boyle, Gilbert Burnet, and John Bunyan (cf. the Preface to *Term Catalogues*, ed. Arber). All of these men were consistent and even prolific writers of dialogues.

Aside from this external evidence, there is ample demonstration of the popularity of the dialogue in the numerous and unusually consistent contemporary praise of this "plain, easy, and familiar way" of writing.

In "The Author's Apology for his Book" which acts as a preface for *Pilgrim's Progress*, John Bunyan wrote, "I find that men (as High as Trees) will write Dialogue-wise; yet no man doth them slight for writing so."³³ In the first edition of *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*, by far the largest word on the title page is *Dialogue*; and in "The Author to the Reader" Bunyan speaks of his choice of form: "I have . . . put it into the form of a Dialogue, that I might with more ease to my self, and pleasure to the Reader, perform the work."³⁴ Thus, early in the period under discussion, Bunyan was giving evidence of a general recognition that the dialogue afforded a popular, extensively used, pleasurable, and instructive medium for communication.

In the widely read *Plurality of Worlds*, Fontenelle³⁵ expressed his belief that the conversational method is not alien to the approach which Truth herself would make were she able to meet men:

Ne croyez-vous pas que si la sagesse elle-même vouloit se présenter aux hommes avec succès, elle ne seroit point mal de paroître sous une figure qui approchât un peu de celle de la Marquise? Sur-tout si elle pouvoit avoair dans sa conversation les mêmes agrements, je suis persuadé que tout le monde courroit après la sagesse. Ne vous attendez pourtant pas à entendre des merveilles, quand je vous ferai le récit des entretiens que j'ai eus avec cette dame; il faudroit presque avoir autant d'esprit qu'elle, pour répéter ce qu'elle a dit de la manière dont elle l'a dit.³⁶

³³ 1678, sig. A5v.

³⁴ *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman, Presented to the World in a Familiar Dialogue between Mr. Wiseman and Mr Attentive* (1680). This opinion reflects that of one of Bunyan's models; Arthur Dent, in *The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven* (1674 edition, title page) explained that his work was "set forth Dialogue-wise for the better understanding of the simple."

³⁵ Fontenelle was only one of many well-known and influential writers of dialogues in France. E. g., Father Bouhours, *Entretiens d'Ariste et d'Eugène*; Father Nicolas Malebranche, *Recherche de la Vérité, Conversations chrétiennes, Méditations Chrétiennes & Métaphysiques, Entretiens sur la Métaphysique & sur la Religion, Entretiens sur la Mort, Entretiens d'un Philosophe chinois sur la nature de Dieu*; Perrault, *Parallel of the Ancient and Modern Touching Eloquence*; and, of course, Fontenelle's *Dialogues des Morts*.

³⁶ *Oeuvres de Monsieur de Fontenelle* (Amsterdam, 1764), 2. 7-8. Here Fon-

Other writers spoke of being "pleased . . . with the Fashion" of the dialogue;³⁷ of its "being . . . manag'd with more freedom than a regular discourse";³⁸ of its having "obtain'd well among intelligent Readers";³⁹ and of its being "that great and powerful Art."⁴⁰ As Addison noted in his discussion of medals, "Some of the finest treatises of the most polite Latin and Greek writers are in Dialogue, as many very valued pieces of French, Italian, and English appear in the same dress."⁴¹

Aside from the general praise of the *genre*, writers frequently stressed the special merits of the dialogue in communication of highly contentious ideas and in really effective argumentation. For example, Dryden paid tribute to the force of dialogue writing when he praised "the Reverend, Ingenious and Learned Dr. Eachard, who by using the same Method [*i. e.*, the dialogue as practiced by Lucian, Erasmus, and Fontenelle] and the same Ingredients of Raillery, and Reason, has more baffled the Philosopher of Malmesbury, than those who assaulted him with blunt, heavy Arguments drawn from Orthodox Divinity."⁴² In a related field William Nicholas, a prolific writer of religious dialogues, justified the wisdom of his method in this manner:

For all the Objections which I have heard against such a free Way of urging the Theistical Arguments in Dialogue, I still think it is more like to do good among infidels, than a Methodical Discourse, ranged into Chapter and Section. . . . Now the dialogical Way of all others is most apt to excite Attention, by constantly springing up new Objections, which set a continual Edge upon the Mind, and make it eager to see them removed; so that the Author of a Dialogue has this Advantage above others, that he carries the

tenelle exemplified (as did Dryden) the harmonious relationship between the dialogue as a medium for expression and scepticism as a mode of thought.

³⁷ *Temple's Essays*, ed Spingarn (Oxford, 1909), p. 3. Note also the statement of Addison in a letter to Stepney "I have endeavoured to treat my subject, that is in itself very bare of ornaments, as divertingly as I could I have proposed to myself such a way of instructing as that in the dialogues on the Plurality of the Worlds" (*Works*, ed G. W. Greene [Philadelphia, 1883], 2, 482-83).

³⁸ John Oldmixon, *Reflections on the Stage* (1699), sig A6v.

³⁹ James Tyrrell, *Bibliotheca Politica*, 1718, p. 1v.

⁴⁰ John Sheffield, *An Essay Upon Poetry*, in *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Spingarn, 2, 292. I should add that Sheffield's praise was for the form itself, not for the work of his contemporaries.

⁴¹ *Dialogues upon the usefulness of Ancient Medals*, p. 35.

⁴² *Works of Lucian*, 1711, pp. 44-45.

Reader's Thoughts always fresh along with him, which are generally lost.⁴³

Even the Earl of Shaftesbury, who (as we shall see) was one of those who raised his voice against the contemporary fate of the dialogue, called the *genre* "a successful method of dealing with heresy and infidelity."⁴⁴

The almost universal praise of the merits of the dialogue as a mode of entertainment *and* as a mode of instruction was such as to warrant William Guthrie's comment in 1755 that "So much has been said by our best writers in Commendation of the Manner of treating a Subject by Dialogue, that it is needless to insist upon its Uses here."⁴⁵

The popularity of the form as understood and used in the Restoration and early eighteenth century was recognized even by those who deplored the quality of some of these dialogues. The contemporary criticism of certain weaknesses⁴⁶ within works which were being presented as dialogues serves only to demonstrate the widespread use of the form. Even Bishop Hurd, who had few kind words for earlier dialogue writers, was not unaware of the popularity of the form at the turn of the century: "For what . . . has been more frequently aimed at in our own, and every modern language? Has not every art, nay every science, been taught in this way?"⁴⁷

The one really detailed and sustained analysis and adverse criticism of the development of dialogue writing in the period under discussion is that of Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury—a man who not only took a keen interest in the philosophical dialogue as a form, but who also looked upon himself as the logical candidate to restore the *genre* to its

⁴³ *A Conference with a Theist*, pp. viii-ix. Cf. also Simon Patrick, *A Friendly Debate Between a Conformist and a Non-conformist*, sig. A5r.

⁴⁴ *Characteristics*, 3, 240-41.

⁴⁵ *M. T. Cicero De Oratore* . . . trans. William Guthrie (1755), p. 3.

⁴⁶ The chief objection was that which we have already noted in Addison, that many of the dialogues wandered or took up too much time with dramatic background. But Addison was careful to add his agreement with the common view that "the pleasantness of the Road often makes amends for its being somewhat about" (James Tyrrell, *Bibliotheca Politica*, p. iv).

⁴⁷ *Moral and Political Dialogues*, 1 xviii-xix. As examples of the extreme variety of matter which actually was taught through dialogues, cf. such didactic works as François Pomey's *The Pantheon*, François Gentil's *The Retired Gardener*, Captain Daniel Newhouse's *The Whole Art of Navigation*.

Platonic perfection.⁴⁸ In *Characteristics* he included an attack upon other dialogue writers which is one of the most complete analyses of the form and, ironically, one of the best evidences of the extent of dialogue writing in his period. As an excuse for the "failure" of his compatriots to master the form, Shaftesbury concluded that his age could not stand the prospect of a true, dramatic representation of itself, that "dialogue is at an end. The Ancients could see their own faces, but we cannot";⁴⁹ and that it would "be an abominable falsehood and belying of the age to put so much good sense together in any one conversation as might make it hold together steadily, and with plain coherence, for an hour's time."⁵⁰ It is readily apparent that Shaftesbury's difference of opinion from the majority of even the best writers of the period is certainly not limited merely to his thoughts about the dialogue. But despite his supercilious sneering at the work of other dialogue writers, Shaftesbury makes quite clear that he was fully aware of what countless other people in the period had noted: that the dialogue was a popular and at least potentially effective method of expression.

4

A real understanding of the growth and importance of the dialogue in English has been prevented by a preoccupation with what *might* have been instead of what actually *was*. It is true that there are few English dialogues which compare favorably with those of Plato, Cicero, and Lucian; and there are not many that reflect even an attempt to copy these classical models. Nevertheless, in the years between 1660 and 1725 the *genre* was widely used and frequently praised, and the native tradition in dialogue writing constitutes a large and fairly important part of the entire body of literature produced in England during those years. Few other literary forms had such wide, varied, and constant usage, and the development of the *genre* in England is sufficiently important to merit more attention than it has heretofore received.

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⁴⁸ At least a part of Shaftesbury's contempt for the dialogue in England may be attributed not only to his admiration for Plato, but more directly and personally to the effect of the numerous dialogues which were used for scurrilous attacks upon his famous grandfather.

⁴⁹ *Characteristics*, 1. 177.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 2. 153.

JOHNSON'S CRITICISM OF THE METAPHYSICAL POETS¹

By WILLIAM R. KEAST

In perhaps none of Johnson's critical writings so much as in the *Life of Cowley* is the modern reader likely to feel that mingling of critical sagacity and wrongheadedness that has always been the burden and despair of Johnson's commentators. It is widely acknowledged that modern criticism of the seventeenth-century poets is heavily indebted to his analysis of metaphysical wit—even if modern critics spurn the inferences which Johnson draws from that analysis; but it is even more widely felt that in dealing with these writers, Johnson's sensitivity failed to keep pace with his analytic powers—that only a man disabled by nature, tradition, or doctrine could be as unperceptive as Johnson seems to be of the beauties of Donne—if not of those of Cowley and Cleveland.

While the *Life of Cowley* has come to be a symbol of the imperviousness of Johnson—and with him, of the eighteenth century—to a state of feeling, a condition of language, and a mode of writing which we now, for whatever reasons, tend to value, certain others of his works, signs of a like incapacity to earlier generations, no longer attract much interest. I do not imagine that a proposal to base this afternoon's discussion on the *Life of Milton* or the *Life of Gray* would have met with much enthusiasm. Yet it was once Johnson's supposed sins against taste and judgment in these, rather than in the *Life of Cowley*, that made his critics storm and his defenders seek cover. The history of Johnson's reputation has yet to be written, but when it is, it will do more than progressively reveal the thought and character of its subject; it will be a miniature history of literary taste and critical theory, recording the vicissitudes of poetic reputations and the fluctuations of critical doctrine and method. Lacking such a history, we may ask ourselves how far our disappointment with Johnson's treatment of the metaphysical

¹ This paper was read before English Group VIII at the 1948 meeting of the Modern Language Association, as part of a symposium on "Dr. Johnson and the Seventeenth-Century Poets"

poets reflects genuine deficiencies in Johnson and how far it reflects merely our present conviction that Donne is a greater poet than, say, Gray or even Milton, and our preference for a critical theory that specializes in detailed accounts of metaphorical structure to one that emphasizes the general conditions of literary pleasure.

Our choice of the *Life of Cowley* as the basis for a discussion of Johnson as critic thus implies a judgment, which may not be free of the influence of prejudice and fashion: Johnson thought it the best of the *Lives*; we do not. Our selection of the *Life of Cowley* also seems to express a hope—a hope that we shall be able to give a comprehensive account of Johnson's failure here, a full assemblage of the causes that led him to pronounce as he did upon the metaphysical poets. If we cherish such a hope, I think we are bound to be disappointed—certainly what I am about to say, which is not at all so ambitious as this, will be disappointing. Of the multitude of causes which combine to produce a complex literary judgment, many are buried beyond recovery and many more are but hazardously recoverable, through speculation and conjecture. We can be sure that taste, temperament, education, admired models, ear, habit of mind, and linguistic experience—to mention only a few of the more obvious influences—must have helped to shape Johnson's preferences, as they do our own. But how much? and in what ways? We may speculate about two modes in the use of language, the Augustan and the dramatic-Shakespearean, and about the inhibiting effect of the former on Johnson; but this will not really help us, since Johnson admires and condemns works composed in both these modes, if indeed they are genuine modes. We may conjecture about the temper of the age and its reflection in Johnson's criticism, but this will get us into as many difficulties as it delivers us from, since, among other things, our knowledge of the temper of the age is derived in no small measure from our knowledge of what Johnson wrote.

These and similar questions I shall avoid, although I hope you will not take my silence on them to imply that I do not think them important, or a least entertaining. I should like instead to deal with the more explicit causes of Johnson's judgment on the metaphysical poets: namely, with the assumptions about criticism and poetry which underlie his arguments and

control his discussion. Even in so limited an attempt there is a crucial difficulty. Johnson is notably not a literary theorist, by which I mean not that he has no theory of literature but that he never sets it all forth in theoretical fashion in one place. With a few minor exceptions, his criticism is entirely practical—the statement and adjudication of particular cases. His theoretical views are introduced only when needed, and only in such quantity as is needed, for the problem immediately in hand; his general views must often be inferred from the particular lines of argument he devises, or expanded from all too brief assertions. The necessity imposed by this feature of his criticism is that of being careful, as we consider one of his essays, that we do not take the theory which seems to underlie it for the whole of his critical position, or suppose, on the other hand, since the subjects of different essays differ as widely as Cowley from Collins, that the theory fluctuates at random from one to another, or that the assumptions used in the criticism of one species of literary work are uniquely adapted to it and not transferable to works of other kinds. We must read the *Life of Cowley* in relation to the *Rambler*, the *Preface to Shakespeare* and the other *Lives*. Despite this difficulty, however, by centering our attention for a moment on the rational bases for Johnson's judgments in the *Life of Cowley*, and on their relation to the larger body of his criticism, we may be able to recover some of the force which he thought his arguments carried, and perhaps to raise some questions of general interest for literary study.

Johnson's examination of the metaphysical poets, like his criticism in general, is marked by the prominence in it of questions which, if they have not entirely disappeared from modern critical discussion, have been relegated to a position so subordinate as to amount effectively to disappearance. At the same time Johnson fails to give any serious or extended consideration to those questions with which modern critics have been chiefly occupied. (Johnson is not much interested in the development and cross-fertilization of metaphor, the structural employment of ambiguity, or the formative use of irony and paradox. His primary concern is with the pleasure which literature is capable of producing. He wants to know chiefly whether poems interest readers, engage their attention, and move them

emotionally. The brilliance of his discussion of wit is widely acknowledged, but analysis and discrimination of literary devices are not for him the central business of criticism. Criticism is above all a matter of judgment and evaluation. The true task of the critic is to determine the value of a work on the basis of its permanent power to please and to fix the position in the scale of human ability which the powers of the author merit.)

Judgment and taste, Johnson is well aware, are fallible, and the critic deals with an object whose essential character derives from the imagination, a faculty that is limitless in its potentialities for discovery and combination.² If he is to render a valid judgment, the critic cannot depend merely on the critical reputation or popular success of a work. He must discover the causes which underlie literary effects.³ But an adequate explanation of these cannot be found in the rules of art or the examples of past performance: "the performances of art," he says, are "too inconstant and uncertain, to be reduced to any determinate idea"; "there is therefore scarcely any species of writing, of which we can tell what is its essence, and what are its constituents; every new genius produces some innovation, which, when invented and approved, subverts the rule which the practice of foregoing authors had established."⁴ Johnson's fundamental conviction—to which his spirited defense of Shakespeare's violation of the unities most eloquently testifies—is that no valid poetic criteria can be derived from a consideration of linguistic or technical devices, apart from their function in achieving poetic effects. The only secure basis for critical judgment is not art but nature, for art proceeds from natural powers, uses natural materials, represents natural objects, and appeals to natural desires—and nature, unlike art, is everywhere the same.

Since literature is ordered to the reader—and the prominence of the common reader, not the élite, is a notable feature of Johnson's criticism—it is these natural desires to which the poet must write and from which the critic must reason in esti-

² See *Rambler* No. 125 (Works [Oxford, 1825], III, 93); No. 156 (*ibid.*, p. 239); No. 158 (*ibid.*, p. 249); No. 23 (*ibid.*, II, 116); No. 121 (*ibid.*, III, 76-77).

³ Cf., e.g., *Rambler* No. 92 (*ibid.*, II, 431-32).

⁴ *Rambler* No. 125 (*ibid.*, III, 93); cf. *Rambler* No. 23 (*ibid.*, II, 115); *Lives of the English poets*, ed G B Hill (Oxford, 1905), I, 18

uating the poet's success. Johnson does not think of the reader as one who submits himself to a work in order, after patient study of its verbal structure, to gain understanding; the end of poetry is not the perfection of an object, nor is the end of criticism the disclosure of its inner nature. The work of the poet and the labor of the critic are subordinated to the natural appetite for pleasure from which literature derives its distinctive features and in the satisfaction of which it has its true value. And he insists that the conditions of literary pleasure are twofold. The mind, he says, "can be captivated only by recollection or by curiosity; by reviving natural sentiments or impressing new appearances of things."⁵ All readers demand, if they are to be attracted and pleased, two qualities in literary works: truth—the ideas that slumber in the heart and the sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo—and novelty—the pleasures of sudden wonder. The two most engaging powers of an author satisfy these demands together—making new things familiar and familiar things new. As one or the other of these qualities is emphasized, the two great poetical effects on which Johnson rests his assessment of the metaphysical poets are produced. The pathetic, the movement of the passions, arises fundamentally from the representation of what is uniform in human experience; the sublime, the stimulation of wonder and admiration, arises basically from the presentation of what is new and hence striking. Johnson does not introduce this division of poetic effects into his discussion of the seventeenth-century poets because they seem to him the effects at which these poets were probably aiming; rather they are for him an exhaustive enumeration of poetic effects—the only fundamental ways in which poets can please—and if the metaphysicals are to be regarded as poets, their success in achieving one or the other of these effects must be the basis of judgment.

Both truth and novelty have their root in human passion. Our emotions are engaged only when we are struck by something new or out of the ordinary—"the pleasures of the mind," he says, "imply something sudden and unexpected";⁶ "nothing can strongly strike or affect us, but what is rare or

⁵ *Lives*, I, 458-59.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

sudden.”⁷ And equally our feelings are moved only by what is recognizably human, like ourselves: “we are affected only as we believe”; “what I cannot for a moment believe, I cannot for a moment behold with interest or anxiety.”⁸ The poet who—unlike the metaphysicals—traces intellectual pleasure to its natural sources in the mind of man, discovers that the passions are so constituted in nature as to permit him to achieve both truth and novelty. The passions are on the one hand few, permanent, and regular in their operations: “their influence is uniform, and their effects nearly the same in every human breast: a man loves and hates, desires and avoids, exactly like his neighbour; resentment and ambition, avarice and indolence, discover themselves by the same symptoms in minds distant a thousand years from one another.”⁹ But the passions, if few, are susceptible of infinite modification: the careful observer sees that the regularity and varied complexity of human life can be brought together, as Johnson joins them in one of the scientific metaphors of which he was so fond: “It has been discovered by Sir Isaac Newton,” he says,

that the distinct and primogenial colours are only seven; but every eye can witness, that from various mixtures, in various proportions, infinite diversifications of tints may be produced. In like manner, the passions of the mind, which put the world in motion, . . . from whence arise all the pleasures and pains that we see and hear of, if we analyze the mind of man, are very few; but those few agitated and combined, as external causes shall happen to operate, and modified by prevailing opinions and accidental caprices, make such frequent alterations on the surface of life, that the show, while we are busied in delineating it, vanishes from the view, and a new set of objects succeed, doomed to the same shortness of duration with the former . . . the mutability of mankind will always furnish writers with new images.¹⁰

(Johnson's criticism of the metaphysical poets is based on these premises—these poets do not move the passions, because they deal with the remoter feelings and with peripheral situations; they do not evoke wonder, which is akin to surprise, because they are not content to rest in the presentation of strik-

⁷ *Rambler*, No. 78 (*Works*, II, 367).

⁸ *Lives*, III, 438; II, 16; cf. III, 227; III, 235; *Rambler* No. 60 (*Works*, II, 286-288).

⁹ *Adventurer* No. 95 (*Works*, IV, 81); cf. *Rambler* No. 68 (*ibid.*, II, 322-23).

¹⁰ *Adventurer* No. 95 (*ibid.*, IV, 83).

ing juxtapositions but must pursue them to the last detail. Johnson develops these general views in the *Life of Cowley* with a high degree of sophistication. His analysis of wit, for example, is conducted with an analytic subtlety not always recognized. Johnson discriminates three meanings of wit, corresponding to the three sources from which poetic effects arise—the language of a poem, its thoughts, and the objects which it represents. The first gives Pope's definition of wit, the second yields the conception of wit as thoughts at once natural and new, and the third gives the famous conception of wit as *discordia concors*. The effect of each kind of wit depends on that which follows it, and the last—the *discordia concors*—is a definition not of metaphysical wit merely, but of all wit, valuable in general, the seventeenth-century poets having merely “more than enough,” and yoking the “most heterogenous” ideas together “by violence.” And similarly the other premises Johnson uses to criticize the metaphysical poets are not limited in their applicability merely to writers marked by metaphysical wit. The same principles underlie his discussions of poets who are quite un-metaphysical. It is thus not a peculiarity of the metaphysical style that it led Cowley and Donne to miss the sublime by paying too much attention to details; Johnson criticizes Shakespeare's description of Dover Cliff in *King Lear* in precisely the same terms, and he finds Young's poem *The Last Day* languid and unaffecting because a succession of images divides and weakens the general conception.¹¹ And again, if the metaphysical poets miss the pathetic through their disregard of the uniformity of sentiment which enables us to conceive and excite the pains and pleasures of other minds, so too do many others, among them poets whose language at least has been thought to bring them within the range of Johnson's taste. Like Cowley's, the amorous effusions of Prior are not happy: dictated neither by nature nor by passion and having neither gallantry nor tenderness, they are the work of a man trying to be amorous by dint of study; *Hudibras* is a poem of inexhaustible wit, but most of its effect is now lost, for it is founded not on standing relations and general passions but on those modifications of life and peculiarities of practice which, being the progeny of error and

¹¹ *Johnson on Shakespeare*, ed. Raleigh (1931), pp 158-59; *Lives*, III, 393; cf. Boswell, *Life*, ed Powell, II, 87; *Rambler* No. 137 (*Works*, III, 147-48).

perverseness, must perish with their parents.¹² If the common reader cannot feel the effects of metaphysical poems based on esoteric lore, neither can the reader of Pope's *Imitations of Horace* or West's *Imitations of Spenser*: "An imitation of Spenser is nothing to a reader, however acute, by whom Spenser has never been perused. . . . The noblest beauties of art are those of which the effect is co-extended with rational nature, or at least with the whole circle of polished life; what is less than this can be only pretty, the plaything of fashion and the amusement of a day."¹³

And so it is with the other items in Johnson's bill against the seventeenth-century poets—each rests on a premise that is brought into play many times elsewhere in Johnson's work, applied with the same result to works superficially very different from the poems of the metaphysicals. But if we cannot find anything peculiar to the metaphysicals in the grounds on which he criticizes them, neither can we arrive at Johnson's conception of poetic excellence by simply taking the contraries of their faults as poetic virtues. Johnson, it is true, seems occasionally to talk as if literary pleasure is to be achieved through the grandeur of generality or the uniform simplicity of primitive qualities; but bear in mind the practical orientation of his criticism that I mentioned earlier. Only so much theory emerges as Johnson needs to decide the case in hand; if he is dealing with a witty or allusive writer like Cowley or Butler, deficiencies can be adequately defined by emphasizing the lack of attention to general passions and large appearances evident in their work. But his criticism is filled with cases of the opposite sort, where the writer, aiming only at general truth, contents himself with the large appearance and the common passions. With these writers Johnson is no less severe, for they too fail to command interest or provide pleasure, and his criticism of them sounds often as if he were recommending a liberal dose of metaphysical subtlety and surprise.

Thus the plays of Nicholas Rowe seldom pierce the breast with pity or terror because they contain no deep search into nature, no accurate discrimination of kindred qualities or nice display of passion in its progress: in them "all is general and

¹² *Lives*, II, 202; I, 213-14.

¹³ *Ibid.*, III, 247; II, 16.

undefined."¹⁴ Of Young's *Universal Passion*, Johnson says that the poet "plays, indeed, only on the surface of life; he never penetrates the recesses of the mind, and therefore the whole power of his poetry is exhausted by a single perusal: his conceits please only when they surprise."¹⁵ And the defect of Dryden's *Eleanora* is that Dryden wrote without exact knowledge: "the praise being therefore inevitably general fixes no impression on the reader nor excites any tendency to love, nor much desire of imitation."¹⁶

From an opposite direction we come at precisely the defect of Cowley—*The Mistress* has no power of seduction; she plays round the head but reaches not the heart; her beauty and absence, her kindness and cruelty, her disdain and inconstancy, produce no correspondence of emotion.¹⁷ The effect is the same; the causes are contrary—Cowley is too learned and particular, Dryden and Young too vulgar and general. Lasting excellence in poetry—the power to please many and please long—arises neither from wit nor sublimity merely, neither from the merely particular nor the merely general. The irregular combinations of fanciful invention may delight awhile, by that novelty of which the common satiety of life sends us all in quest, but uniformity too must tire at last, even though it be uniformity of excellence, for the pleasures of the mind imply something sudden and unexpected; that which elevates must always surprise. A great poem is a composite of qualities which taken alone are evanescent or unaffecting. It must represent the permanent and enduring emotions such as any man, merely because he is a man, has felt and must feel again; it must figure forth an object in which the human imagination can recognize itself. But at the same time it must plumb deeply enough the recesses of the heart and the complexities of human life to seize the attention and hold the interest of the reader with unexpected combinations of the ordinary.

These general principles are not less true for being occasionally employed in the examination or praise of writers and works which it is not the modern fashion to enjoy, nor are they less necessary, in some form of statement, to a comprehensive esthetics, even though their generality—which is in one sense a

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, II, 76.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, III, 394.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 441-42.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 42.

structure. For every *Valediction: Forbidding Mourning* there are dozen poems like *Fuscara: or the Bee Errant*.)

(It does not seem likely that anyone not fanatic in his devotion to Cleveland or Cowley will disagree with Johnson's verdict that their poetry is on the whole without any genuine power to interest or move, that it is remarkable chiefly for the extravagance of fancy displayed on every occasion and always in the same way. But can Donne himself be exempted from this charge? Johnson's knowledge of Donne's poetry was curious and extensive; he ranges over the whole corpus of Donne's work except the divine poems, drawing examples of the metaphysical manner from poems rarely read today save by the biographer, the professional critic, and the historian of ideas. And great tracts of Donne's poetry can be read only with difficulty; it is precisely from these much more often than from the smaller body of Donne's work which modern taste has fixed upon as providing the true measure of his talent—that Johnson quotes—from the epithalamions, the epicedes, the verse letters, and the Anniversaries; only four of his sixteen quotations, indeed, are from the *Songs and Sonnets*.²¹ If we leave aside all consideration of Donne's influence on the development of the language, of his contribution to the sophistication of the lyric, and of his fascinating personal history, how many great poems did he write?—how many that the intelligent common reader, uninstructed by precept and unprejudiced by authority, is likely to read with passion or wonder? I venture to think that they are but few, that they are not to be found primarily among those Johnson quotes, and that the pleasure we take in them

²¹ The quotations from Donne in the *Life of Cowley* are drawn from the following poems (I give page and paragraph numbers to Vol I of Hill's edition of the *Lives* and page and line numbers to the one-volume Grierson edition of Donne, Oxford, 1933): pp. 23-24; par 68 "To the Countesse of Bedford," pp. 167-68. 21-28; p. 24, par 69 "To the Countesse of Bedford," p. 175 1-10; p. 24, par. 70: "To Mr R. W.," p. 186 29-32, p. 26, par 77: "A Valediction: of Weeping," p. 35. 10-18; p. 26, par. 77. "An Epithalamion, or Marriage Song on the Lady Elizabeth, and Count Palatine," p. 116. 85-88; pp. 26-27, par 78 "Obsequies to the Lord Harrington," p. 248 35-40; p. 28, par. 82: "A Valediction: of my Name, in the Window," p. 23. 1-4; p. 30, par. 86: "Elegie on the L. C.," p. 261. 13-16, pp. 30-31, par. 87: "Ecclogue 1613. December 26," pp. 117-18. 23-32; p. 31, par. 90. "To the Countesse of Bedford," p. 173 43-47; p. 31, par 91 "To Mr. B. B.," p. 188. 10-14; pp. 31-32, par. 92 "The Second Anniversarie," p. 232 173-84; p. 32, par. 94: "Twickenham Garden," p. 27. 19-22; p. 32, par. 95 "Elegie VIII," p. 81 1-7; p. 33, par. 98: "Obsequies to the Lord Harrington," p. 247. 15-25; p. 34, par. 100: "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," p. 45. 21-36.

does not depend chiefly on the heterogeneity of the elements joined in their metaphors or the distance which naturally separates them.)

As a critic Johnson is not without important defects, of which the most serious is not his taste but the absence in his theory of any save a rather general account of literary effects, such as are common alike to all forms of the art. He has no method for isolating the peculiar effects of different species of poetry and for analyzing and judging the means for their production. But this lack—which even modern criticism has made no real progress in supplying—should not obscure the central value of Johnson's example. For he forces upon our attention a concern for the ultimate effects and values of literature—its power to interest and move our emotions—without which the utmost refinement of wit and technique in the poet or of analysis in the critic must prove illusory. He insists, thus, upon a high standard of excellence, and it is no wonder if under it so few works and so few writers win unqualified praise.

"It is not by comparing line with line that the merit of great works is to be estimated," he says in the *Life of Dryden*,

but by their general effects and ultimate result. It is easy to note a weak line, and write one more vigorous in its place . . . but what is given to the parts may be subducted from the whole, and the reader may be weary though the critick may commend. Works of imagination excel by their allurements and delight; by their power of attracting and detaining the attention. That book is good in vain which the reader throws away. He only is the master who keeps the mind in pleasing captivity; whose pages are perused with eagerness, and in hope of new pleasure are perused again; and whose conclusion is perceived with an eye of sorrow, such as the traveller casts upon departing day.²²

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²² *Lives*, I, 454.

THE DEJECTION OF COLERIDGE'S ODE

By RICHARD HARTER FOGLE

Coleridge's *Dejection: an Ode* is not quite so gloomy as the title would suggest, and as students of the poem have generally maintained. This conclusion is in one sense revolutionary: in another, as I hope to show, it is natural and inevitable to the verge of the obvious.

It is usually assumed that the dejection of the *Ode* is both deep and unrelieved—melancholy at its most atrabilious. Fred Manning Smith, in an article examining its relation to Wordsworth's *Intimations Ode*, remarks that "In Wordsworth's *Ode* grief finds relief and ends in joy; in Coleridge's, grief finds no relief and ends in dejection."¹ More recently Elisabeth Schneider in her excellent treatment of *Kubla Khan* has likewise employed it as a touchstone for gloom: "The dejection (of *Kubla Khan*) is not deep and hopeless as in the ode."²

Both of these statements are, of course, true in their contexts, but they are both inadequate, just as they are both typical. They are epitomes of the accepted view of the *Ode*. This view has arisen and remained unchallenged probably because *Dejection* has hardly been studied as a poem at all; its enormous biographical and philosophical importance has obscured its poetic structure. It has been treated as a reflection of irretrievable personal disaster, as a lament for Coleridge's impending loss of poetic imagination, and as the expression of a despairing subjectivism; but seldom as a poetic object and unity.

Thus Professor de Selincourt has correlated the *Ode* with Coleridge's life. By establishing and publishing its earliest version he is able to draw valuable biographical conclusions—that the *Ode* was originally addressed to Sarah Hutchinson, rather than to Wordsworth; that it arises directly from the circumstances of Coleridge's hopeless marriage and his equally hopeless love of Sarah; and that it signalizes his approaching

¹ "The Relation of Coleridge's *Ode on Dejection* to Wordsworth's *Ode on Intimations of Immortality*," *PMLA*, L (1935), 224.

² "The 'Dream' of 'Kubla Khan,'" *PMLA*, LX (1945), 799.

loss of poetic power, as a direct result of these insuperable domestic and amatory difficulties.³

The philosophical or metaphysical interpretation of *Dejection*, which develops naturally from the biographical view, utilizes a single passage (ll. 45-58) to point out the *Ode*'s unhappy subjectivism. This passage, "O lady! we receive but what we give," is for the philosophical approach the core of the poem, expressing as it does a crisis in Coleridge's thinking about the relationship of nature and the mind—a disturbance of the subject-object balance which he sought to maintain in both philosophy and poetry.⁴

Each of these approaches is entirely valid in its own sphere, and is indeed indispensable as a preliminary to a full and accurate reading of the poem. But let us not confuse our purposes. If we attempt to substitute biography, or philosophy, for the poem itself, we shall be using methods inappropriate to the end to be attained, and are likely to find ourselves possessed of unsatisfactory conclusions: unsatisfactory not because untrue, but because they are half-true, incomplete, and misleading. Taken as a literary structure the *Ode* in its wholeness is more interesting and more valuable than an abstract proposition drawn from a part of it only: as Coleridge himself warns, "that which suits a part infects the whole." Taken as an "imitation" of the mind which made it, as Coleridge would take it,⁵ it expresses a richer, more varied, completer experi-

³ E. de Selincourt, "Coleridge's *Dejection. an Ode*," *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association*, XXII (1937), 7-25. Also in E. de Selincourt, *Wordsworthian and Other Studies*, Oxford, 1947. See also T. M. Raysor, "Coleridge and 'Asra,'" *SP*, XXVI (July, 1929), 305-324, for the influence of Sarah Hutchinson upon Coleridge's poetry and life. The *Ode* plays an important though subsidiary role in Professor Raysor's argument.

⁴ See, e.g., S. F. Gingerich, *Essays in the Romantic Poets* (New York, 1929), pp. 45-49; J. W. Beach, *The Concept of Nature in Nineteenth-Century English Poetry* (New York, 1936), p. 123. Both Gingerich and Beach, however, are inclined to consider the subjectivism of the *Ode* a permanent trait of Coleridge's thought, interpreted by Gingerich as "transcendentalism" and by Beach as "antinaturalism." See E. Bernbaum, *Anthology of Romanticism*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1948), pp. 1103-1104, for a brief digest of the view implied in my text; at greater length N. K. Stallknecht, *Strange Seas of Thought* (Durham, N. C., 1945), pp. 159-171; also J. Shawcross, *Introd., Biographia Literaria* (Oxford, 1907), p. xliii.

⁵ The poem expresses and objectifies the mind and the creative process from which it takes its origin. Thus the famous definition of poetic imagination, although it is concerned with the *poet* and *poetry* rather than the *poem*, implies that the critic will commence with the poem and work backward to the complex activity of mind which is its cause. His analysis and evaluation of the poem will be con-

ence than the sense of flat defeat to which the biographical approach must bring us, or the static rigor of the philosophical conclusion.

In attempting to describe the *Ode's* evolving meaning, I shall assume the authority of the established text of 1817 as its most perfect version, and shall assume also that Coleridge as a metaphysical realist⁶ and a Romantic poet of nature is expressing his experience through the interaction of his thoughts and emotions with natural symbolism and imagery. Whether or not this relationship is harmonious, the objectification of the mind by means of external nature is the only method available to him in this poem. Consequently considerable stress will be placed on what may be termed "the natural situation," as it develops over a period of hours; with the interaction of the wind and the Aeolian harp (a crystallizing symbol of mind and nature), the significance of the moon, and the objectification of the various shifts and developments of mood by means of the rising and changing wind. This relationship, however, is "symbolic" rather than "allegorical." These equivalences of mind and nature are suggested, not explicit; they are dynamic and variable, not fixed and exact. They may be characterized by Coleridge's own conception of symbol as "that which means what it says and something more besides";⁷ thus the natural setting of the *Ode* is objectively present, not the mere servant of allegory—but it is also the medium of Coleridge's meaning.

In Strophe 1 the "natural situation" is a tranquil night, amid which light winds "mould yon cloud in lazy flakes," and cause a

. . . dull sobbing draft, that moans and
rakes
Upon the strings of this Aeolian lute,
Which better far were mute.

trolled by his conception of the developing structure and unity of the mind behind it. See *Biographia Literaria*, II, pp 12-13

⁶ Used here to signify belief in the reality of mind and nature both, in agreement with the views of Shawcross, Stallknecht, and Bernbaum

⁷ The symbolical . . . is always itself a part of that, of the whole of which it is the representative . . . the latter (the allegory) cannot be otherwise than spoken consciously,—whereas in the former (the symbol) it is very possible that the general truth may be working unconsciously in the writer's mind. . . ." (Coleridge, *Miscellaneous Criticism*, ed. T. M. Raysor (Cambridge, Mass., 1936), p 99)

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The phenomenon of the new moon with the old moon in her lap, however, forewarns of storm to come. The tone and the particulars of the moon-image, one may suggest, are in no way ominous, but rounded and agreeable, with the hint of that same effluence of light which later on in the poem is used to symbolize joy (ll. 9-12).^s Strophe 2 describes Coleridge's mood at its nadir of dejection—

A grief without a pang, void, dark, and
drear,
A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,
Which finds no natural outlet, no relief
In word, or sigh, or tear . . . (ll. 20-24)

This state of mind is the counterpart of the natural setting of Strophe I, which objectifies it in the light wind, the lazy cloud, and the sobbing draft, inharmonious yet dull and passive. The Aeolian harp "had better far be mute" because at present it expresses only discord. The moon-phenomenon is a harbinger not of disaster but of hope, for only a storm will clear the air, and only some violence of release will rescue Coleridge from the prison-house of his dejection. The relationship between nature and mind is explicitly stated in ll. 15-20, in which Coleridge prays for the wind and the rain that "Might startle this dull pain, and make it move and live." The way is prepared, then, for a natural cycle which shall move from calm to storm to calm again, the last as it were a reconciliation; and Coleridge's own statement in Strophe 1 warrants us in interpreting the development of his mood according to the same design.

Strophe 2, after setting forth his dejection, states his peculiar dilemma,—of the beautiful forms of nature he must say only

I see them all so excellently fair,
I see, not feel, how beautiful they are! (ll. 37-38)

Only through Joy, he continues, can we have more

Than that inanimate cold world allowed
To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,—
(ll. 51-52)

Our world is created by ourselves, and only the power of Joy

^s Cf. ll. 53-55, 62, 66, 73-75.

can endow it with life and meaning. This power of Joy,⁹ essential to the poet, Coleridge has now lost, robbed of it by repeated afflictions, and with it (I should be inclined to say in this poem identical with it) his "shaping spirit of imagination." Joy and Imagination, it should be noticed, are active agencies, by which the mind creates, shapes, and unifies its vision of reality; dejection is passive and inert, uncreative and lifeless.

The poet's griefs rise to their climax in Strophe 6. In combatting them his "sole resource" has been "to be still and patient all I can"—to deaden his nature (see ll. 89-90) by "abstruse research." This ill-advised attempt more even than the afflictions which caused it to be made has *nullified* the creative Imagination, for he has sought to suppress the very activity which make it possible. Understanding, the abstracting and calculative power, he has cultivated; but Understanding alone leaves the world essentially dead, inert, and inorganic.¹⁰ Coleridge has committed the very sin which he most fears against himself; he has mutilated the living organism of mind, destroyed its complex harmonies, upset its ordered hierarchy by seeking to substitute a part for the whole.¹¹

Now, to return to the natural setting, as does Coleridge in the following Strophe VII, this unhappy self-mutilation has been brought about by a deliberate passivity, for the "abstruse research" which has so disproportionately exercised the Understanding was undertaken to deaden, not to arouse, the spirit; and sluggishly rules its scattered kingdom in default of the banished creative power. This passivity, this "stillness" and "patience," is equivalent to the oppressive calm of Nature in Strophe 1. The logic of the relationship, in company with the storm-warning of the new moon (ll. 9-14), demands that this

⁹ Gingerich acutely remarks, "Had he (Coleridge) had a profound conviction, such as Poe's, that sorrow and melancholy are the best themes for poetry, he undoubtedly could have written many marvellous poems in a doleful spirit. But like Wordsworth he held that truly creative art must be inspired by joy, that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." (*Essays in the Romantic Poets*, p. 48.)

¹⁰ "It (Imagination) is essentially *vital*, even as all objects (*as* objects) are essentially fixed and dead" (*Biographia Literaria*, I, p. 202). If the term "Understanding" be objectionable, we may shift our terms and define Coleridge's state of mind as the result of an attempt to disjoin Intellect and Feeling.

¹¹ See ll. 92-93. In Coleridge's dialectic the antithesis of Whole and Part is roughly equivalent to the antitheses of Reason and Understanding, Imagination and Fancy, Imitation and Copy, Organic and Mechanical, Genius and Talent.

stagnant spell be broken, and declares that any change which involves activity must be a change for the better. And accordingly at the beginning of Strophe VII Coleridge rouses from his melancholy introspection to find that the wind has risen, and the storm is at its full.

The Aeolian lute, earlier touched only by a "dull sobbing draft" (ll. 6-7), now screams as if in agony (ll. 97-98). The wind, a "Mad Lutanist," raves among the leaves and blossoms, becomes a tragic actor; and then a mighty epic poet who sings of a host in rout, of groans and of tramlings (ll. 104-113). Action disorganized and painful, but action nonetheless, and as such clearly preferable to the earlier deathlike lull. The feelings are awake, the Imagination, though imperfectly, is at work. Storm follows calm, strife has supplanted uneasy peace, as in a plot at the height of its complication, and after a moment of rest comes the reconciliation or denouement.

. . . all that noise, as of a rushing crowd,
With groans, and tremulous shudderings—all
is over—
It tells another tale, with sounds less deep
and loud!
A tale of less affright
And tempered with delight (italics mine),
As Otway's self had framed the tender lay . . .
(ll. 115-120)

These lines express a further development of the Imagination, a more complex organization in which the shaping power moulds into unity the diverse elements of grief, fear, and their opposite delight (see l. 124). Strife, in effect, has given way to reconciliation, and for Coleridge only the Imagination can reconcile. The mind, recalled to activity, has regained its wholeness. Ceasing to flee, it has faced its difficulties and in part at least has overcome them.

In the final strophe, in which the poem is symbolically brought by midnight to a term, Coleridge returns to the "Dear Lady" to whom the poem is addressed. He wishes her a gentle Sleep, and prays that

. . . this storm be but a mountain-birth,
 May all the stars hang bright above her
 dwelling,
 Silent as though they watched the sleeping Earth!
(ll. 129-131)

Here, I believe, two points are to be noticed. First is the significance of Coleridge's turning here to another: that he is able to wish her well, to forget himself in imagination of the peace and joy which he invokes in her behalf and of the creative vision of reality (ll. 135-136), the ability "to see into the life of things," which only Joy can give. This argues for the rebirth of his imagination, which in Coleridge as in Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats is the faculty which enables us to escape the prison of self and participate in other lives and modes of being.¹² The second point, interesting though less material, is that Coleridge wishes for his friend peace and clear skies untouched by disturbance. Having in the poem imaginatively portrayed a hard-won balance attained only by struggle, for another he asks a simpler, more static equilibrium. The implications give food for thought.

Examination of *Dejection: an Ode*, then, reveals a more highly organized, a more rounded, and comprehensive experience than investigation of either its biographical or its philosophical elements can uncover. Having stated a truth, however, let us not do a disservice by exaggerating it, or by confusing our purposes. The reconciliation achieved in the Ode is relative, not absolute, just as common sense will tell us that Coleridge's dejection could not be absolute, nor his difficulties wholly crushing. There is no disposition here to deny that these difficulties were great, nor that his poetic powers were, as he says, permanently impaired. What is affirmed basically is that the poem itself will yield us more valuable, subtler, and truer insights than any nonliterary abstraction from it can attain.

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¹² See, e.g., Coleridge's statement specifically in terms of the poetic genius, *Biographia Literaria*, II, pp 14-15.

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TALUS

By GEOFFREY WAGNER

Spenser's Talus has not been given his due. He has seldom been promoted beyond that man of brass made by Hephaestus for Minos of Crete to protect his island. The great critics in the field—Padelford, Greenlaw, and Bhattacharje—have generally interpreted Talus as a blind instrument of a certain kind of justice, and—as such—a caricature of Grey's harsh regime in Ireland. Remembering Book V of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and Spenser's allusion to the twelve virtues of Aristotle in his prefatory letter to Raleigh, readers have usually accepted this view without questioning. It is illuminating, however, to study the relationship between Book V of *The Faerie Queene*, especially of Cantos i-iv (inclusive), and the facts of Spenser's own political experience that he was allegorizing. A comparison will show how a reactionary politician accepts the limitations of an aesthetic to which, after all, he has dedicated his life. Thus Talus, if closely examined, is more than he appears at first sight, and a reading of the episodes in which he is involved may suggest an ambivalence in Spenser's genius, one that possibly affects a reading of much of his work.

Everyone is familiar with the tone of Spenser's *Veue of the Present State of Ireland*, and the *Brief Note of Ireland*, being the official report on the Tyrone rebellion. The latter is not dissimilar to Payne's *Brief Description of Ireland* of 1589 or to

the common histories of the period.¹ It is generally agreed that, as partisan of Elizabeth, Spenser supported a merciless attitude to Ireland. It has been argued that "the cruelty which he advised was . . . a cruelty that was the truest kindness if one be disposed to grant the necessity of the subjugation";² he has been considered here also as really a far-sighted statesman, a "seer," who realised that a strong policy was necessary towards Ireland for its own good.³ Further, he has been defended on the score that Ireland was, after all, the bridgehead of Spanish imperialism of the time.⁴ Nevertheless, the general impression which remains is one of aristocratic ruthlessness.⁵ For instance, to the Irish assemblies (the only platform for the common people of that time) "doe commonly retort all the scumme of the people, where they may meete and confer of what they list, which else they could not do without suspicion or knowledge of others."⁶ Irenaeus speaks of the people as "blindly and brutishly informed,"⁷ whilst the Irish footsoldiers "steal, they are cruell, and bloodie, full of revenge and delighting in deadly execution; licentious swearing, and blasphemers, common ravishers of women, and murtherers of children."⁸ Nevertheless, Spenser's inhumanity here should be defended from the too literal interpretation of it along Sinn Féinist lines, as in Irish criticism from the *Dublin Review* of 1834 to Miss Henley in 1928.⁹ For it is not simply champion-

¹ The Irish chroniclers of greatest value here are *Annals of the Four Masters* (ed. J. O'Donovan, 7 vols., 1856), and the *Annals of Loch Cé* (ed. W. Hennessy, Rolls Series, 2 vols., 1871), available in Marsh's Library, Dublin. The standard modern history of Ireland in the Tudor Period is perhaps that by R. Bagwell (*Ireland under the Tudors*, 3 vols., 1890), or M. Bonn's excellent, though unfortunately still untranslated, *Die Englische Kolonisation in Ireland* (3 vols., Stuttgart, 1906).

² Edwin Greenlaw, "Spenser and British Imperialism," *Modern Philology* IX (1912), p. 347.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ H. S. V. Jones, "Spenser's Defense of Lord Grey," *University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature* V (August 1919), p. 13.

⁵ *Cp.* here Milton, *Samson Agonistes*, ll. 674-77, and *Paradise Regained*, Bk. III, l. 49.

⁶ "Veue of the Present State of Ireland," *Ancient Irish Histories* (Dublin, 1809), p. 389.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 397.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 383.

⁹ Pauline Henley, *Spenser in Ireland* (Dublin, Cork University Press, 1928), p. 168 ff.

ship of that Lord Deputy who spiked the mutilated trunk of John of Desmond and hung it in chains on the North Gate of Cork until the wind blew it into the river below. Spenser's real desire was for an aesthetic, rather than a political, reaction, though he saw one in terms of the other ("the Irish, in the violence of theyr furies, treade downe and trample under foote all both divine and human thinges, and the lawes themselves they doe especially rage upon, and rend in peeces, as most repugnant to theyr libertye and naturall freedome, which in theyr madness they affect.")¹⁰ A comparison between the *Veue* and Aristotle's *Politics* has shown that both Spenser and Aristotle wanted weighty reasons before a change was made.¹¹ The sort of justice Spenser wanted for Ireland was really literary in kind, the harmony he hoped for that of a renaissance scholar, rather than that of a Lutheran politician. It was the aesthete's revulsion from the ugly lawlessness of the Ireland of Con O'Neill and Murrough O'Brien, of the illegitimate Matthew 'Kelly' and the fanatical bishop, James O'Hely. This is seen in all Spenser advocated for Ireland: the right of escheat was tyranny and the Brehon Law implicit anarchy;¹² the Papistical nature of Irish Catholicism spelt ecclesiastical chaos.¹³ The discipline Spenser wanted for Ireland was therefore a type of learning "next after the knowledge and fear of God."¹⁴ The violence with which he would impress this on the Irish, it can be argued, was but the violence of his time. Yet, despite all this, the general climate of the work is inhuman, and it is necessarily inhuman to one extent: that by the criteria of aesthetic principles, the Irish *had* turned away from authority and (Aristotelian) reason.¹⁵ This duality, between

¹⁰ *Veue*, p. 328.

¹¹ William Fenn DeMoss, *The Influence of Aristotle's "Politics" and "Ethics" on Spenser* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1918), *passim*.

¹² *Veue*, p. 332.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 396.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 483.

¹⁵ There have been various critical defenses of Spenser's defense of Grey, the best known of which is perhaps H. S. V. Jones' *Spenser's Defense of Lord Grey* (University of Illinois, August, 1919). Here we find quoted Irenaeus' remark that Grey was "most gentell, affable, loving, and temperate; but that the necessitye of that present state of thinges enforced him to that violence" (p. 14). This may have been so but the emotional timbre of Grey is harsh: cp., "A Declaration by the Lord Deputy and Council" (*Irish State Papers*, 1596, No. 261), "The way to suppress the Northern rebels is to prosecute them with a sharp war, and

poet and politician, is all-important to a reading of the Talus episodes in *The Faerie Queene*, which represent the reverse process, a poet dipping into political experience for his matter. And, interestingly enough, the most compassionate references in the *Veue* are those quasi-poetical passages where Spenser stepped outside the bounds of political rhetorick into his own medium. Examples of this can be found in the tender passages describing that "most beautiful and sweet country"¹⁶ with its "goodlye valleyes . . . fitt for fayre habitations,"¹⁷ lyrical moments where the quality of the style most nearly approaches the divine prose of Lyly or Robert Greene. When we come, for instance, across a reference like

"out of every corner of the woodes and glennes they came creeping
foorthe upon theyre handes, for theyre legges could not bear them
. . . and yf they founde a platt of water-cresses or sham-rokes, there
they flocked as to a feast for the time."¹⁸

we sense at once that we are in an aesthetic context, even if we are not instinctively reminded of Alma's enemies:

"Vile caitive wretches, ragged, rude, deformd,
All threatning death, all in straunge manner arm'd;
Some with unweldy clubs, some with long speares,
Some rusty knives, some staves in fier warmd:
Sterne was their looke; like wild amazed steares,
Staring with hollow eies, and stiff upstanding heares."¹⁹

The attitude (in which the sack of Kilcolman doubtless confirmed Spenser) is principally emotional and imaginative, and thus the paragraph from the *Veue* ends, significantly, on a note of compassion that is rare there: "Any stonye heart would have rued the same."²⁰ Finally, when we reach the intensely poetic atmosphere of Book V of *The Faerie Queene*, the unhappy plight of Irena has a different persuasion altogether from Spenser's treatment of Ireland in the *Veue*.

thereby extirpate those who are obstinate." Professor Greenlaw's defense is expressed in his article in *Modern Philology* (VII, p. 187 ff.) and suggests that Spenser was in favor of Grey's administration according to the principles of the Machiavellian politic. Actually Spenser seems to have seen Machiavelli very much through the screen of Bodin's *Six Livres de la République*.

¹⁶ *Veue*, p. 28.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

¹⁹ *The Faerie Queene*, II. ix. 13.

²⁰ *Veue*, p. 139.

This, then, is a possible clue to the reading of Talus. Talus is administrative justice, the companion of Arthegall,²¹ legislative justice.²² He is an unreasoning police force and, in the famous passage where Arthegall has to restrain him,²³ for example, critics have interpreted him as a plea on behalf of Grey.

But, strangely enough, the force of Talus, although simply a medieval personification of an abstraction, a mere morality play puppet, works against Grey-Arthegall. And the effect of this is but a filling out of a character we had already tended to dislike before, a knight who had grudged losing,²⁴ and who had been quite spitefully merciless.²⁵ It seems likely, then, that Spenser's intention was to vindicate Grey by showing that it was the instrument of justice itself, Talus, which was harsh, rather than the administrator, but that here, as in the *Veue*, the result was different.

Professor Padelford has made a suggestive outline of the place of Talus in the execution of justice;²⁶ thus in Canto I we find Talus dealing with domestic problems, Sangliere being made to bear the head of the woman he has decapitated as penance: in Canto II he is a type of policeman dealing with public extortion (Pollente and the paynim Lady), and indeed could even "like a limehound winde her":²⁷ in Canto III defrauders like the false Florimell, Braggadocchio and Trompart, are dealt with: in Canto IV property rights (the argument between Bracidas and Amidas) are settled. But surely these are the embodiments of Aristotle's phases of distributive justice, corrective justice, retaliation and equity. And the chief challenge to this theory makes the point about this interpretation of Talus, namely, that Arthegall does not positively represent the high ideals of justice, he does not stand for those principles of right which are actually opposed to the storm-trooper violence of Talus.

²¹ The new spelling "Artegall" in Book V has seemed to some critics to imply a new level of interpretation, cp. Josephine Waters Bennett, *The Evolution of "The Faerie Queene"* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1942), p. 179

²² *FQ*, V. i. 12.

²³ *FQ*, V. xii. 8.

²⁴ *FQ*, IV. v. 9.

²⁵ *FQ*, IV. vi. 17.

²⁶ The Variorum Edition of Book V; also Professor Padelford's article, "Talus—the Law" in *Modern Philology*.

²⁷ *FQ*, II. ii. 25

This is borne out in the Radigund episode where, after deserting his master because he "thought it iust t'obay"²⁸ the letter rather than the spirit of the law, Talus is finally pitilessness personified.²⁹ But nowhere in all this does Arthegall emerge as clemency in the positive. In the passage mentioned above, where he restrains his page,³⁰ and at the end of the book as he stays Talus from chastising Detraction, who with Ennuie stands for the anti-Grey rumor-mongers in Ireland,³¹ he acts negatively, in terms of Talus, rather than positively, in terms of himself. Arthegall has little in common with Mercilla in Canto IX, and finally Spenser has to resort to telling the reader that Arthegall is clemency, when, in the temple of Isis, into which Talus is not allowed to enter,³² the "righteous Knight" is awkwardly symbolized by the crocodile clemence.³³

It might be objected that it was a special kind of justice, even of aesthetic justice, which Spenser is portraying here. There is not space to discuss this large subject. To Spenser, Justice meant temperance in the soul,³⁴ harmony and order in the state, both personal and political. All the situations Arthegall and Talus meet lend themselves, and add up, to this view. True to Aristotle's definition,³⁵ Sangliere represents the excess of committing injustice, the youth in Canto I the excess of suffering injustice. Right reason constitutes the essence of justice,³⁶ and the introduction of the Astraea legend at the beginning shows that justice is not to be regarded as a mechanical rule, but as a matter of moral judgment. Yet where does Arthegall implement this concept?

In no place is he the positive "doer" of justice. His form of justice is only seen in negative terms, in relation to Talus. We are therefore brought to the conclusion that Arthegall can do no more than speculate on justice, Talus no more than act it out. They are twin aspects, speculative and active, of a single soul, and they cannot perform pertinently without each other. Before justice can be done, both Arthegall and Talus

²⁸ *FQ*, V. v. 19 (l. 19).

²⁹ *FQ*, V. vii. 35.

³⁰ *FQ*, V. xii. 8.

³¹ *FQ*, V. xii. 43.

³² "Just conduct is a mean between committing and suffering injustice."

³³ *FQ*, V. ix. 1 ff., cp here the Leveller Principles, as in *An Appeal from the Commons to the Free People* (1647), p. 2.

³⁴ *FQ*, V. vii. 3 (l. 9).

³⁵ *FQ*, V. vii. 22.

³⁶ *FQ*, V. ix. 32 ff.

must be present,³⁷ and the one must seek counsel of the other, just as Minos had to be instructed by Jupiter, Numa by the fairy Egeria, and Pythagoras in the solitary cave at Samos.

The message seems to be, then, that unless a man embody within himself this mean, he cannot be truly just in his relations to the other individual virtues. Thus it can be seen that the result of this allegory is rather different from an apologia for Grey. What Spenser had set out to portray (according to critics like Upton),³⁸ as the public virtue of justice, as justice in society, emerges emotionally as private justice, justice in the individual soul, justice in a subjective, aesthetic, context, and by this standard Grey comes out for ever damned. C. S. Lewis has admitted this persuasion, calling Arthegall "one of the most disagreeable characters in the whole poem,"³⁹ but the point is whether this is in spite of, or because of, Spenser.

In conclusion, it is still generally thought that Spenser was trying to vindicate Lord Grey in Arthegall,⁴⁰ and that he did this in his allegory by showing that it was the method (Talus) not the man at fault, and that the man, indeed, in many ways, was at the mercy of the method. It is all the more significant, therefore, that critics who agree with this opinion, and who are familiar with Spenser's idea of political justice in the *Veue*, yet see Arthegall as disagreeable. This shows that the final conception in this ambivalent figure of justice was aesthetic. Spenser may have loved Grey in person, admired him as much as from the *Veue* and the dedicatory sonnets he seems to have, but he was first a poet, and in an aesthetic context, the Arthegall-Grey⁴¹ figure *had* to appear disagreeable. For aesthetically Grey was repulsive. "*Nella tormenta Irlanda fu inviato Lord*

³⁷ DeMoss, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

³⁸ The edition of 1758.

³⁹ C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1936), p. 348.

⁴⁰ Cp. Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 189. Frank Covington Jr., "Spenser's Use of History in the 'Veue of the Present State of Ireland'" *The University of Texas Bulletin* (*Studies in English* # 4, March 15, 1924), pp. 5-38. Edwin Greenlaw, "Studies in Spenser's Historical Allegory" (Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins Press, 1932), pp. 142-3. Pauline Henley, *op. cit.*, p. 137. Kate Warren, *Introduction* to her Edition of Book V, pp. ix-xv. Variorum Edition, etc.

⁴¹ In the Burbon episode Arthegall does not, of course, represent Lord Grey. In the closing Cantos of this Book it is generally agreed that he stands for Sir John Norris.

Grey of Wilton, per stroncare ogni rebellione."⁴² As a politician Spenser may have admired him—"non fa che eliogare la maniera forte del suo capo"⁴³—but he could not play traitor to poetic values.

This dichotomy affects, of course, a reading of all Spenser's work and indeed is germane, to take one instance, to references to court life, strangely derogatory when it is realized they were written long before he was disappointed at court, when, in fact, he was still angling for position there.⁴⁴ It seems therefore that it is possible to see this allegory in a new light, for although Book V is an unhappy book, as Lewis remarks,⁴⁵ yet what emerges is a positive, happy quality. If the book is "uninspired,"⁴⁶ if the versification is not, for once, Mantuanesque, one is the more easily persuaded that the aesthetic content has poured into the subject matter. Yet not all critics do agree, in fact, that Talus lacks poetic beauty. Coleridge's praise of Talus is well-known and De Vere and DeSelincourt also saw in this figure considerable imaginative vigor.

"The fifth book would have been severe even if it had been successful."⁴⁷ The conception of Talus is, if looked at in this sense, successful. It is the tragedy of the poet-politician and as such it is extremely modern. But the casual interpretation of many critics (such as C. S. Lewis, B. E. C. Davis, Janet Spens, W. L. Renwick and Emile Legouis) seems unjust. This allegory is proof of the true poet in Spenser. In his own life a champion of reaction (as much against the communism of More's *Utopia* as against the Munster Anabaptists), in his poetry he comes close to Langland in his figure of Munera. When circumscribed by poetry and poetic values, the politician becomes a liberal, possessed of that human responsibility no true artist can deny.

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⁴² Francesco Vighone, *La Poesia Lirica di Edmondo Spenser* (Genova, Emiliano Degli Orfini, 1937), p. 30.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Speaking of "pierlesse Poesye" Piers admitted that "Nor in Princes pallace thou doe sitt" (*The Shepheards Calendar*, October Eclogue, l. 80), a note that occurs often in the later Spenser (*FQ*, Bk VI and the *Prothalamion*), as in Milton (*Comus*), but which is strange here.

⁴⁵ Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 349.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 347.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 350.

THE ENDING OF *HAMLET* AS A FAREWELL TO ESSEX

By EDWARD S. LE COMTE

A number of scholars, of whom the best known is Dover Wilson, have believed that the inspiration for the character of Hamlet "came to Shakespeare from the career and personality of the most conspicuous figure in England during the last decade of the sixteenth century, namely the brilliant, the moody, the excitable, the unstable, the procrastinating, the ill-fated Earl of Essex."¹ The identification is of course only partial, and it does not, I take it, seek glibly to pluck the heart of Hamlet's mystery. It simply furnishes, at most, a basis for that mystery (if there is a mystery) by suggesting that the dramatist, along with thousands of his contemporaries, was fascinated by a particular case of enigmatic human nature, more complex than anything to be found in treatises on melancholy,² and that in some degree, which it will be the business of Part One, the *pro* side, of this paper more particularly to define, *Hamlet* is a memorial to Essex.

¹ Dover Wilson's edition of *Hamlet* (Cambridge, 1936), Introduction, p. lxvi. The main assembler of points in favor of the Essex theory has been Lilian Winstanley in "*Hamlet*" and *the Scottish Succession* (Cambridge, 1921) and "*Hamlet* and the Essex Conspiracy," *Aberystwyth Studies*, VI, VII (1924-25). The earlier study contains interesting points connecting Essex with Hamlet not repeated in the later study, but it unfortunately pursues at the same time, and with much greater enthusiasm, a very different and as it seems to me incompatible theory, linking *Hamlet* to the Darnley murder of 1567 (very ancient history, that!), the marriage of Mary Queen of Scots to Bothwell the murderer, with James as the infant avenger. I do not see how Hamlet can be identified with both James and Essex (and a piece of Southampton), Claudius with Bothwell and Leicester, Polonius with Rizzio and Burleigh, etc. Such ingenuity recoils back upon itself, leaving the average reader in no mood to consider either theory; whereas one of them is well worth exploring. These two publications largely summarize, or expand, or offer further background to, points in the brilliant pioneering article by James T. Foard, "The Genesis of Hamlet," *Manchester Quarterly*, VIII (1889), 1-31, 122-152, 220-247, who by virtue of this article and other publications going back to 1862 seems to have been the founder of the Essex theory.

Quotations and line-numberings in the following article are based on the Oxford text.

² For a warning on this "clinical" approach to Hamlet see Louise C. Turner Forest, "A Caveat for Critics against Invoking Elizabethan Psychology," *PMLA*, LXI (September, 1946), 651-672.

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However, as this is to enter the realm of conjecture, honest and balanced consideration demands a statement of cons as well. Rather than risk the confusion of a paper that would be at war with itself on every page, I have kept the two sides separate. Part One will present a brief review of some old points and make some new ones in behalf of the Hamlet-Essex theory, especially as it can be related to the ending of the play, where it has hardly been applied and yet where it most neatly works. In Part Two I have concentrated the principal objections and alternatives that occur to me.

PART ONE

One starts, at any rate, with facts. First, even those who treat of Shakespeare as if he had lived in a vacuum, have to admit that once, in the chorus to Act V of *Henry V*, the dramatist went very far out of his way to make a direct and extended reference to Essex, wishing "the general of our gracious empress" a speedy and successful return from Ireland and alluding to his popularity:

How many would the peaceful city quit
To welcome him!

This was in 1599: Essex's tragedy and Hamlet's were soon to be enacted. Equally undeniable is the link between Shakespeare and Essex provided by Southampton, who, because of his part in the same rebellion for which Essex was beheaded, was in the Tower when *Hamlet* was written,³ and remained there until James freed him. Thirdly, there is overwhelming evidence that plays *were* taken topically, as by the Queen herself, when she said, "I am 'Richard the Second,' know ye not that?"⁴ The Essex conspirators would have had her so,

³ I agree with H. D. Gray ("The Date of *Hamlet*," *J.E.G.P.*, XXXI, 1932, 51-61) that "all the indications that we have seem to point to the summer or autumn of 1601 for the composition and first production of *Hamlet*," and I am here adding to those indications. This year for *Hamlet* is one matter on which Dover Wilson and Sir E. K. Chambers agree (see the latter's *Shakespearean Gleanings*, Oxford, 1944). As for Gabriel Harvey's marginal note, Gray argues that it refers to the *third* Earl of Essex, not the second, while Kittredge—in, for instance, his edition of the *Complete Works* (Boston, 1936, p. 1145)—found its present tense "indecisive." Chambers (*op. cit.*, p. 68) wonders if 'commendes' is not "a scribal error for 'commended.'"

⁴ Joseph Quincy Adams, *A Life of William Shakespeare* (Boston, 1923), p. 319.

apparently, since they paid forty shillings to have Shakespeare's play performed on the eve of the rebellion.⁵ As it turned out they might more appropriately have attended a performance of *Hamlet*, had that play as we have it been in existence, with its unsuccessful rebellion and its hero who cannot make up his mind. For on Sunday, February 8, 1601, hundreds of Londoners personally witnessed the indecisions of Robert Devereux, who, given a native hue of resolution, might well on that day have become King of England.⁶

To come to the play itself, it has been pointed out a number of times in what an uncanny way the family situation of Robert Devereux fits Shakespeare's changes—for are we not to call such a change as the poisoning his, since we do not know it to have been made by anyone else?—in the old Amleth story. At least according to purveyors of scandal, the Earl of Leicester seduced Robert's mother, poisoned his father (by "an Italian *Recipe*" which induced "an extreame Flux"),⁷ and then

The deposition scene in *Richard II* was significantly omitted from the first three quartos (1597, and 1598—two), and, just as significantly, its inclusion in the fourth quarto of 1608 was featured on the title-page.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 317-318.

⁶ He ought to have invaded Whitehall instead of the City, for the queen was not guarded. To quote the leading modern authority, G. B. Harrison, *The Life and Death of Robert Devereux Earl of Essex* (New York, 1937), Essex's last fight ended "in miserable failure. Had it been well planned and resolutely followed the rising might have succeeded. If he had attacked the Court at dawn his force would have been greatly superior to any that could be mustered at a moment's notice, and even if he had not immediately broken in, he would have cut off the Palace from the City" (p. 293).

⁷ The scandal was aired in a publication of 1584 which caused a furore by its scurrilities, *The Copie of a Letter Wryten by a Master of Arte of Cambridge to his Friend in London*, etc. (S. T. C 19399), usually referred to as *Leicester's Commonwealth* (which title it bore when republished in London in 1641). It is possibly worth mentioning that a manuscript copy of this pamphlet as well as of that allegorical device of Bacon's which I cite below, along with other material relating to Essex, formed part of the mysterious Northumberland manuscript which some have, very dubiously, sought to connect with Shakespeare (see E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare*, Oxford, 1930, I, 506, and II, Appendix B, no xvi). Clara Longworth de Chambrun is one of those who contend that the dramatist once possessed and scribbled on this manuscript (*Shakespeare Rediscovered*, New York, 1938, pp. 267 ff.), and she even finds a verbal parallel between *Leicester's Commonwealth* and *Hamlet* (unimpressive, involving the word "quietus," III, i, 75), all the while being apparently unaware of the claims that may be advanced for *Leicester's Commonwealth* as one of the sources of *Hamlet*. I quote from the only modern reprint of the pamphlet, that in Frank J. Burgoyne, editor, *ColloTYPE Facsimile & Type Transcript of an Elizabethan Manuscript preserved at Alnwick Castle, Northumberland* (London, 1904), p. 90.

married—this is fact—the widow. We thus have a situation as near to that of *Hamlet* as “The Murder of Gonzago,” for if the reputed history involves an Earl rather than a King (it is hardly fair at this point, and at this point only, to cite the 1603 Quarto, where the King and Queen are Duke and Duchess), and is without the blood-relationship (which derives from the saga) between murdered and murderer, the play within a play lacks the adultery theme and does not give us fratricide either.

There were those in the audience who would recall this notorious scandal,—as does Camden⁸ in his *Annals*—if they had occasion to, but of course it was ancient history. The association of Hamlet with Essex would have come rather from current history and from correspondences between the two characters. The correspondences are probably sufficiently summed up in the words from Dover Wilson with which this article began, except that there is another adjective to add: “woman-hating.”⁹ The Earl cursed the very femininity of the Queen herself. “The Court is a prey to two evils—delay and inconstancy; and the cause is the sex of the sovereign.”¹⁰ Nothing that Hamlet says to Ophelia or his mother is so savage as Essex’s outburst when, during his final estrangement from the Queen, someone ventured to speak in his presence of “Her Majesty’s conditions.” “Her conditions! Her conditions are as crooked as her carcase!”¹¹ The fact remains that, whether we are thinking of Amleth or of Essex, Shakespeare has trans-

⁸ *Annals, or, the Historie of the Most Renowned and Victorious Princess Elizabeth, Late Queen of England*, 3rd edition (London, 1635), pp. 190-191. (The original Latin edition was published in 1615)

⁹ See the more extensive summary in Wilson’s *The Essential Shakespeare* (Cambridge, 1932), pp. 92-107. But a word from Sir John Harington should be added on how mad Essex seemed in the last months of his life: “he shifteth from sorrow and repentance to rage and rebellion so suddenly, as well proveth him devoid of good reason as of right mind. In my last discourse he uttered strange words, bordering on such strange designs, that made me hasten forth and leave his presence.” *Nugae Antiquae*, quoted by Walter Bouchier Devereux, *Lives and Letters of the Devereux, Earls of Essex* (London, 1853), II, 130.

¹⁰ Lytton Strachey, *Elizabeth and Essex* (New York, 1928), p. 162. It might be Hamlet speaking when Essex writes the Queen, “when I remember that your Majesty hath, by the intolerable wrong you have done both me and yourself, not only broken all laws of affection, but done against the honour of your sex, I think all places better than that where I am. . . .” *Ibid.*, pp. 176-177.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

mented a crude original hero as well as a crude original plot. Hamlet is nobler in every way than the historical Essex, and we today are left to wonder how his contemporaries could so have overrated and taken to their hearts this spoiled child of fortune, whose vanity and ineptitude abundantly come through in the accounts, but not his charm. Yet there can be no denying his sway over the idealizing poets, and he may well have been the original of Spenser's Sir Calidore, "Courtesie,"¹² though Chapman was nearer to his character in equating him with Achilles.

But leaving the question of character, there is something to be said regarding the personal appearance of Hamlet and Essex. It has been asserted that the Earl affected black in his liveries—this on the basis of a poem of 1590:

Young Essex, that thrice-honourable earl;
Y-clad in mighty arms of mourner's dye,
And plume as black as is the raven's wing.

.

His staves were such, or of such hue at least,
As are those banner-staves that mourners bear;
And all his company in funeral black.¹³

It would seem, however, that this is going too far back in the Earl's life, for the evidence of a poem of 1595 (not quoted by those who quote the above, though it comes from the same poet, Peele) cuts the other way;¹⁴ besides, both are descriptions of special ceremonious occasions. But, and this is my point, Essex in his last days—the Essex whom, by a theory I am going to introduce, Shakespeare was particularly thinking of—did, like the doomed man he was, wear black. During his

¹² See Ray Heffner, "Essex, the Ideal Courtier," *ELH*, I (April, 1934), 7-36.

¹³ "Polyhymnia" by George Peele (*Works*, ed A. H. Bullen, London, 1888, II, 292). Cited by Foard, *op cit.*, p. 125, and by Winstanley.

¹⁴ "The first that led, in cheerful colours clad,
In innocent white and fair carnation,
Was he whose wisdom in his younger years
And love to arms make him so far renown'd,
The noble earl of Essex and of Ewe."

"Anglorum Ferae" in *Works*, II, 349-350. This was on the occasion described below, p. 105.

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trial¹⁵ as well as on the day of his well witnessed¹⁶ execution¹⁷ he was dressed all in black.¹⁸

We must put ourselves in the place of the audiences in those troubled days of 1601 and 1602, when shadows had fallen on the glory of Gloriana. In the second scene of *Hamlet* they see an actor accoutered like Essex, and they begin to find out that this is a play which deals with the question of succession to the Crown—that question which was vexing all England, and Scotland as well, and to which the aged, ailing Queen would give no answer. Did not “Denmark” become England readily enough, and the Danish court the English, which had its full share of factions and spyings and conspiracies?¹⁹ What were

¹⁵ Harrison, *op. cit.*, p. 299.

¹⁶ There were “divers knights and gentlemen to the number of about an hundred” within the Tower yard. Thomas Birch, *Memoirs of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth* (London, 1754), II, 482

¹⁷ Harrison, p. 322. To be very accurate, he was dressed in black up to the last moment. A contemporary pamphlet (which can be checked with half a dozen other accounts in prose or verse) quoted in *Shakespeare's England* (Oxford, 1916), II, 102, describes his “gowne of wrought velvet a blacke sattin sute a felt hatte blacke and a little ruffe about his necke. After his speech to the spectators he put off his gowne and on finishing his prayers opening and putting off his dublet he was in a scarlet wastecote, and then ready to lay downe”

¹⁸ It is just possible that there was another point of outward resemblance

“Who . . .

Plucks off my beard and blows it in my face?”

(II, ii, 607-608)

With Kittredge (ed. *Hamlet*, Boston, 1939, p. 204) I see no reason for regarding this as a purely imaginary beard, although most modern actors appear without it. The insoluble question is, how full and therefore how unusual a beard is meant? If—I make the conjecture just in passing and nothing of moment depends upon it—if this is all that survives of Shakespeare's instructions to the original Hamlet to wear a full beard, we have another striking correspondence before Hamlet has said a word. What a later century would call a goatee was common, but a full beard was rare in Elizabethan times, as now. However, the Earl of Essex took to wearing a full beard after the Cadiz expedition: it got a certain fame as “the Cadiz beard,” and set a fashion (which would make it safer for an actor to wear it in 1601, meaning and yet not meaning Essex). An engraving of Essex in 1600 (reproduced in Harrison, *op. p.* 240; a copy in *The Fugger News-Letters, Second Series*, ed. Victor von Klarwill, London, 1926, *op. p.* 228, is engraved 1601) that was hawked on the streets until the sale was forbidden, shows this beard very amply. What emboldens me to make (in the seclusion of a footnote) this conjecture is that Shakespeare apparently *did* refer to Essex's beard in *Henry V* (“a beard of the general's cut,” III, vi, 83). For details, including Guilpin's satirical references to the “Cadz-beard,” see “Shakespeare, Guilpin, and Essex,” *Shakespeare Association Bulletin*, January, 1948, pp. 17-19.

¹⁹ It is not at all strange that Essex, the chief male figure at Court, should have developed a persecution complex. As early as 1596 he wrote, “I live in a place,

they thinking, these original audiences, by the fourth act, when they found, too, that this was a play with a rebellion in it, just such a rebellion as had taken place on the streets of London a few months before and wrought the downfall of a popular candidate for the throne? Of course the rebellion is not assigned in the play to Hamlet; that would be going too far, and Shakespeare had other purposes. However, as John E. Hankins²⁰ has lately observed, the cry of the populace. "Laertes shall be king, Laertes king!" is not very appropriate, since "In the play there has been nothing to show that Laertes aspired to the throne. We learn from his advice to Ophelia that his family is not of royal blood, and we are told that Hamlet, the lineal heir, is very popular with the public (IV, vii. 18)." Yet, on further consideration, we are all the nearer to the late event here, for Essex had scarcely a claim to royal blood either.²¹ Moreover he, like Laertes, was talked and negotiated out of carrying through his original intention to seize the throne when he might have done so, Queen Elizabeth, like Claudius, not being adequately guarded on that fatal day.

The Essex theory is, in short, a potent instrument of interpretation, and the problem is to use it restrainedly. We must not see Essex everywhere, but only in certain places, and as for the other *dramatis personae*, the more of them we attempt to identify, the more ingenious and improbable we become.²² I

where I am hourly conspired against, and practised upon" Harrison, p. 137. His own conspiracy he regarded as a counter-conspiracy.

²⁰ *The Character of Hamlet and other Essays* (Chapel Hill, 1941), p. 113

²¹ Essex traced his descent from Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester, "which remote alliance with the blood royal constituted his sole claim to the crown" Wilson, ed. *Richard II* (Cambridge, 1939), p. xxxi; for details see Evelyn M. Albright, "Shakespeare's *Richard II* and the Essex Conspiracy," *PMLA*, XLII (1927), 695.

²² The common identification of Polonius with Lord Burleigh does accord with the theory, for Essex scorned that doddering and devious and moralistic chief councillor. (For a connection between the name "Polonius" and Burleigh, see I. Gollancz, *A Book of Homage to Shakespeare*, Oxford, 1916, pp. 173-177.)

May Ophelia—she who sings the refrain "For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy" (IV, v, 186)—insofar as she seems betrayed, stand for Essex's neglected wife? Let me give some "documentation" (in which, however, I do not much believe). Lady Essex, she "of ladies most deject and wretched,/ That suck'd the honey of his music vows" (III, i, 164-165), must have seemed a pathetic figure even in the days before her husband's eclipse; and during it we have the observation of Rowland White under date of November 4, 1599: "My Lady of Essex is a most sorrowful creature for her husband's captivity; she wears all black of the meanest price, and receives

should deny, because it seems to me that the context does not in the least encourage, what many see as the one reference to Essex and his rebellion, "the late innovation" of II, ii, 356.²³ But looking elsewhere, the minimum suggestion would be that there are more allusions to Essex in the play than modern readers have suspected.

William Camden, in his *Annals, or, the Historie of . . . Elizabeth*,²⁴ tells a romantic story apropos of the visit of the Duke of Biron to the Queen in September, ²⁵ 1601.

Whereas certaine *French* writers have delivered, that amongst other things of those which were condemned, she shewed the Earle of *Essex* his skull in her private Chappell, or (as others write) fastened upon a pole, to *Biron* and the *Frenchmen*, it is a ridiculous vanity, for it was buried together with his body.²⁶

no comfort in any thing," and in this suppliant's mourning she haunted the court (Devereux, II, 88). She referred to herself as "an afflicted and woful lady" in her appeal to Cecil (*Ibid.*, p. 174). To come back to Ophelia's fragment of a ballad about "bonny sweet Robin," we have the tune but not the words. it may have concerned Robin Hood, but this is not certain, "Robin" being the diminutive of (and the Queen's name for) "Robert." A letter to Essex from his mother commences, "Sweet Robin": Devereux, I, 494. J. Payne Collier printed a poem (let us hope it is genuine!) called "The Robin" which covertly deals with Essex (*Ancient Biographical Poems*, Camden Society, 1855, pp. 21-23), of which lines 5 to 8 may be taken as a pertinent sample:

"This Robyn is a pretye one,
Well formed at point devise,
A mynion birde to loke upon,
And suer of worthye pryse."

Essex in one of his own poems alluded to himself as "robin" punningly (*Poetry of the English Renaissance*, ed. J. W. Hebel and H. H. Hudson, New York, 1929, p. 132). And to top all this, the Countess of Essex was actually accused of making a ballad about her husband after his death. Richard Bancroft, Bishop of London, complained on February 27, 1600-01, "a fellow goeth about the street, selling the ballads whereof here is a copy enclosed. He giveth it out that the Countess of Essex hath made it, which procureth many to buy it." Historical MSS Commission, Part XI, 88, *Cecil Manuscripts*. This, one of Winstanley's three identifications for Ophelia—she offers it just *en passant*, is the only one that can for a moment be entertained, it seems to me, and then only in the light of the facts just adduced. I admire, but cannot follow, the ingenious process by which Ophelia becomes (*Aberystwyth Studies*, VII, 42 ff) "a kind of Kathleen Ni' Houlihan, or symbol of the Irish nationality."

²³ I find "innovation" used of this very event (*Cecil Manuscripts*, as above, p. 538) and Shakespeare elsewhere means a political upheaval by the word (see Wilson's *Hamlet*, p. 177), but there is still nothing to give it that meaning here.

²⁴ Edition cited, p. 562.

²⁵ Stow dates the arrival of the embassy "at the Tower-wharfe" "About the 5. of September." *Annales* (London, 1615), p. 795.

²⁶ Compare the different account by Jacque-Auguste de Thou: "Au milieu de la conversation qui se tenoit à une fenêtre du Palais, la Reine & l'Ambassadeur jet-

We are to recall not only Hamlet taking up the skull of Yorick, but Hamlet's words to that skull: "*Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come; make her laugh at that.*" (V, i, 212-15.) I believe we may have a case of cause and effect here, but it seems impossible to guess which is cause, and which effect, whether the popular play gave rise to the story, or is capitalizing on it.²⁷

Coming now to the ending of the play, I wish first to add a point to the association, grounds for which have already been given, of Claudius with Leicester. The last scandal of Leicester's life was that he died from a poisoned draft which he had meant for another—namely, his wife, of whom he was jealous. According to the scandalmongers, the Countess exchanged this poison for his medicine.²⁸ What other comment can there be on this than Laertes'

He is justly serv'd;
It is a poison temper'd by himself. (V, ii, 341-42.)

But it is four lines further on that the real ambiguities begin, and continue through seventy lines to the end.

I am dead, Horatio. Wretched queen, adieu!

tèrent les yeux sur la tour de Londres, où l'on avoit exposé un grand nombre de têtes de criminels d'Etat A cette vûe, Elisabeth crut devoir prévenir le ministre François, & pour empêcher que cet affreux spectacle ne la fit soupçonner de cruauté, elle parla fort au long sur les règles de la justice, & de la clémence des Rois, elle ajouta ensuite: 'Vous voyez la tête du Comte d'Essex. Je l'avois élevé aux plus grandes dignités, & il avoit toute la faveur de la Reine; mais ce téméraire abusant de mes bontés a eu l'audace de croire que je ne pourrois jamais me passer de lui.'" *Histoire Universelle* (London, 1734), XIII, 611. Thus the legend gained currency abroad, especially as earlier conspirators against the Queen *had* had their heads "stuck up on poles" (see *Fugger Letters, Second Series*, p. 229).

²⁷ Here, then, is an explanation for those critics who have gone so far as to wonder why the only relics in the gravediggers' scene are detached skulls. Hamlet's jibes at the painting of female faces, here and to Ophelia. "I have heard of your paintings too, well enough; God hath given you one face, and you make yourselves another;" (III, i, 149-152), represent nothing very unusual in the literature of the time. Gulpin's "Satyra secunda" (*Skæletheia*, 1598), for instance, is devoted to cosmetic satire. It takes an extravagant form in *Der Bestrafte Brudermord* (Furness Variorum *Hamlet*, II, 128). See, for a pre-Shakespearean thrust at "payntinges," More's *Utopia*, ed. J. C. Collins (Oxford, 1904), p. 105, and cf. Collins' note, p. 225. At the same time, one cannot help thinking of Queen Elizabeth's grotesque refusal to face old age. *E.g.*, Ben Jonson told Drummond of Hawthornden: "Queen Elizabeth never saw herself after she became old in a true glass; they painted her, and sometymes would vermilion her nose." *Conversations*, ed. R. F. Patterson (London, 1923), p. 30.

²⁸ Harrison, p. 35.

In two ways the second half of this line is rather odd. In the first place, in the play the "wretched queen" is dead: why does the dying Hamlet say "adieu" to her? Are they not going to the same place (to put it theologically, as this play would)? When Romeo hears that Juliet is dead, his thought is that by dying he will join her,²⁹ not be separated from her: he therefore bids farewell to life, but not to her. This is the normal pattern. In drama we are used to the dying saying farewell to the *living*, or survivors saying farewell to the dying and the dead, but I can think of no instance, except the above, where the dying bid adieu to the dead. The second oddity is this word "queen" itself. Up to now Hamlet has invariably addressed the Queen as "mother."³⁰ That word "mother" is indeed the motive and the cue for Hamlet's passion. Only here does he say "queen," and not, I conjecture, without topical reason. Let it not be supposed that I am contending the Queen is Queen Elizabeth at any other point in the play, even though the psychoanalysts have found Hamlet to be in love with his mother and though Queen Elizabeth was old enough to be Essex's mother. It is a nonce identification, like that cry which rings out twice at the end of *Macbeth*: "Hail, King of Scotland!" To see a passing compliment to King James in those words is not to claim that Malcolm is King James. Of course in *Hamlet* Shakespeare is not indulging in any compliment to the present ruler: ³¹ rather, in "wretched" he is taking the view that Elizabeth lived to regret her favorite's death, a romantic view, eloquently vouched for by William Browne,³² as well as

²⁹ "Well, Juliet, I will lie with thee to-night," (V, i, 34), and V, ii, 106 ff. In fact there is the same thought in *Hamlet*, in the pun on "union": Is thy union here?/ Follow my mother."

³⁰ The only approach to this significant switch before had been in the formal and bitter statement,

"You are the queen, your husband's brother's wife;
And,—would it were not so!—you are my mother." (III, iv. 15-16.)

³¹ As J. Q. Adams, *op. cit.*, p. 320, remarks, Shakespeare "seems not to have forgiven Elizabeth for her heartless treatment of the unfortunate Essex, and her long imprisonment of Southampton. This may perhaps explain why he refused, in spite of several protests, to write, as did so many poets, an elegy on the great Queen who had taken such delight in his plays, or to express any grief at her death."

³² *Britannia's Pastorals* (1613) follows, an allegory about Leicester and the Queen with one on Leicester's step-son, recalling the famous intrusion into the Queen's closet by Essex on his return from Ireland, when he took her by surprise

by Lytton Strachey. And certainly it is fact that she was wretched from the ills of old age, if not from a broken heart.

The point is that from here on, now that the plot is over and the time for ceremonious leave-taking has come, Hamlet is, by my postulation, at least as much Essex in Shakespeare's mind as he is Hamlet, and the first sign is this impression that it is a living queen who is being addressed here. But the main clue is in the persistent imagery of the stage and of the theatre that marks the ending of the play and makes it self-conscious, an imagery which seems to have struck none of the commentators. It begins with the very next lines:

You that look pale and tremble at this chance,
That are but mutes or audience to this act,
Had I but time,—as this fell sergeant, death,
Is strict in his arrest,—O! I could tell you—
But let it be. Horatio, I am dead;
Thou liv'st; report me and my cause aright
To the unsatisfied.

We are first put in mind of the theatre, and then—after a curious and surely not purposeless allusion to death as a sergeant-at-arms—the theme of the faithful friend's telling Hamlet's story aright and so redeeming a wounded reputation—that theme is struck, and further insisted on when Hamlet wrests the poisoned cup away.

O God! Horatio, what a wounded name,
Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me.
If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
Absent thee from felicity awhile,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,
To tell my story.

“with her hair about her face,” and when, like Gertrude, she feared at first for her life:

“And coming through a grove wherein his fair
Lay with her breasts display'd to take the air,
His rushing through the boughs made her arise,
And dreading some wild beast's rude enterprise,
Directs towards the noise a sharpen'd dart,
That reach'd the life of his undaunted heart,
Which when she knew, twice twenty moons nigh spent
In tears for him, and died in languishment.”

Book I, Song 4, 753-760. For various views as to why the Queen “gave her selfe over wholly to melancholly,” see Camden, *op. cit.*, pp. 584-585; compare Devereux, II, pp. 203 ff.

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In the words of John Chamberlain,³³ writing February 21, 1600-01, Essex defended himself at his trial in such a manner "that a man might easily perceive that, as he had ever lived popularly, so his chief care was to have a good opinion in the people's minds now at parting." He did not know that to forward that good opinion he would have after his death the greatest possible panegyrist. Yet, a few months earlier, in a letter to the Queen, he had prophesied correctly, though with undue bitterness: "they print me and make me speak to the world, and shortly they will play me upon the stage."³⁴

The ending of *Hamlet* is full of word-play, of ambiguities and puns which have remained locked because no one has applied the key. We must look again at the line,

Absent thee from *felicity* awhile.

Guilpin in *Skialetteia* satirised Essex as "Faelix" (or "Felix").³⁵ The reason for this appellation is not far to seek. We have only to recall Spenser's similar pun on "Devereux" in *Prothalamion*,³⁶

Joy have thou of thy noble victorie,
And endlesse happinesse of thine owne name
That promiseth the same:

where, as R. E. Neil Dodge points out, "Devereux" is taken as equivalent to "*devenir heureux* or simply *heureux*." Shake-

³³ Quoted by Winstanley, "*Hamlet*" and the Scottish Succession, p. 143.

³⁴ Harrison, p. 261.

³⁵ "Satyra prima," sig. C3v (Shakespeare Association Facsimiles, 1931; see G. B. Harrison's Introduction, pp vii-viii).

"For when great *Faelix* passing through the street,
Vayleth his cap to each one he doth meet,
And when no broome-man that will pray for him,
Shall have lesse truage than his bonnets brim,
Who would not thinke him perfect curtesie?
Or the honny-suckle of humilittie?
The devill he is as soone: he is the devill,
Brightly accoustred to bemist his evill:
Like a Swartrutters hose his puffed thoughts swell,
With yeastie ambition: *Signior Machiavell*
Taught him this mumming trick, with curtesie
T'entrench himselfe in popularitie,
And for a writhen face, and bodies move,
Be Barricadode in the peoples love"

³⁶ 152-154 (*Complete Poetical Works*, ed. R. E. Neil Dodge, Boston, 1908).

spere was thus neither the first nor the second poet to pun felicitously on the name! (Most *infelicitously*, according to our taste, but we have to remember how different the Elizabethan view was, that Shakespeare could play on words in deadly earnest, that Lady Macbeth could say, "I'll gild the faces of the groom withal; / For it must seem their guilt," that King Henry the Fourth angrily dismisses Worcester with the words, "You have good leave to leave us," that both Romeo and Juliet die with a *double-entendre* on their lips.)

The "war-like volley" of "young Fortinbras" is heard saluting "the ambassadors of England," whereupon Hamlet says,

I cannot live to hear the news from England,
But I do prophesy the election lights
On Fortinbras: he has my dying voice.

Here we have Shakespeare going to great because dramatically inappropriate lengths to relate "the news from England" to the election lighting on Fortinbras. The question seems unprecedented, but I ask it: why the connective "But"? In the play the news from England has nothing to do with Fortinbras: that news is simply "That Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead." Why should Hamlet with almost his last breath, at this climactic point in the drama, be showing any interest in those trivial false friends whom he hoisted with their own petard, "not shriving-time allowed"? Can it be that Shakespeare wants to connect Fortinbras and England for good current reasons? Fortinbras, this prince from another country, may here stand for James VI of Scotland,³⁷ soon to be James I of England, with whom Essex was in secret correspondence, whose unfortunate ally Essex (as well as Southampton) was. The name Fortinbras—"Strong-arm"—seems ridiculous to us when we think of the later James, but it superlatively fitted the James who was supposed to have overpowered with his own bare hands a would-be assassin on the day of the Gowry conspiracy, August 5, 1600.³⁸ It was a conservative prophecy, then,

³⁷ James had actually come from Norway in 1589, bringing back Anne of Denmark, whom he had married in person at Oslo, November 23rd. The Fortinbras-James equation dates back to Foard's article (*op. cit.*, p. 242) of 1889, but neither this writer nor Winstanley gives it any detailed consideration (the latter being handicapped, of course, by her belief that Hamlet is James).

³⁸ For a description based on the official accounts, see G. B. Harrison, *A Last Elizabethan Journal* (London, 1933), pp. 105-109.

this of Hamlet's and Shakespeare's, but it was made at a troubled time when no one could be sure who would be the next ruler, and all were anxious.

After those four last words of Hamlet, "The rest is silence," which happen to be foreshadowed at the beginning of that same letter of the Earl's from which I have already quoted: "Before . . . he that sends this enjoins himself eternal silence, . . ." ³⁹ Horatio pronounces his benediction:

Now cracks a noble heart. Good-night, sweet prince,
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!

Malone long ago pointed out that there is an echo here of Essex's twice-uttered prayer on the day of his execution: "lift my soul above all earthly cogitations, and when my life and body shall part, send Thy blessed angels to be near unto me, which may convey it to the joys in Heaven"; and again: "I pray . . . it would please the Everlasting God to send down His angels to carry my soul before His Mercy Seat." ⁴⁰ As for "Good-night, sweet prince," Miss Winstanley notes that shortly after the execution the ballad-mongers had a broad-side ready entitled "Essex' Last Good-night," every stanza of which ended with the refrain "good-night"! ⁴¹

After exclamations have been exchanged on the dismal sight, Horatio says,

. . . give order that these bodies
High on a stage be placed to the view;
And let me speak to the yet unknowing world
How these things came about:

For this business of putting bodies on a stage there is no

³⁹ Harrison, *Essex*, p. 260.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 324-325 So much, on the historical side, for A. C. Bradley's question, "Why did Shakespeare here, so much against his custom, introduce this reference to another life?" (*Shakespearean Tragedy*, London, 1905, p. 147.) Essex's last speech is regularly considered to have influenced *Henry VIII*, II, i.

⁴¹ "*Hamlet*" and *the Scottish Succession*, p. 144. "Essex's Last Good-night" and "The Death of Robert Devereux Earl of Essex" are in *The Roxburghe Ballads*, ed. W. Chappell (London, the Ballad Society, 1871), I, 564-574. It may be noted, apropos of my discussion of "Wretched queen, adieu!", that the former has the line, "Farewell, Elizabeth, my gracious Queen!", beginning a stanza of farewells. "Good-night" in ballads is, one would gather, a farewell applied regularly to doomed men. See F. J. Child's note, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (Boston, 1892), IV, 36.

precedent nor parallel in the Elizabethan drama.⁴² Nor is there anything in the Hamlet saga to account for it.⁴³ I suggest that Shakespeare is playing with words here, beginning with the word "stage," which can mean, yes, a platform or "scaffold" (as the blundering 1st Quarto calls it⁴⁴), but which can also mean the stage of the Globe theatre and be a continuation of the play's consciousness of itself, of the dramatist's references to his own creative art. (In fact a glance at a concordance or Schmidt's *Lexicon* will show that Shakespeare never uses the word "stage" elsewhere in any other concrete sense than the stage of a theatre.)

"Stage" is the first pun, and "world" is the second.

. . . let me speak to the yet unknowing world
How these things came about.

Scholars have seen a reference to the Globe Theatre at II, ii, 386. I suggest that there is a second allusion here. Dekker in fact made the identical pun:

How wonderfully is the world altered! And no marvel, for it has lyen sick almost five thousand years: so that it is no more like the old *Theatre du monde*, than old Paris Garden is like the King's Garden at Paris. What an excellent workman, therefore, were he that could cast the *Globe* of it into a new mold.⁴⁵

⁴² The best the editors can do is to quote from Arthur Brooke's poem *Romeus and Juliet*, 2817-2818:

"The prince did straight ordain, the corsers that were found
Should be set forth upon a stage high raised from the ground,"

but the circumstances in the poem are entirely different, as the context makes clear, the bodies of the two lovers being the *corpora delicti* of a crime of which two living persons are accused:

"Right in the selfsame form, showed forth to all men's sight,
That in the hollow vault they had been found that other night;
And eke that Romeus' man and Friar Laurence should
Be openly examinéd; for else the people would
Have murmuréd or feigned there were some weighty cause
Why openly they were not called, and so convict by laws."

Ibid., 2819-2824.

⁴³ There is no hint that a funeral pyre is meant, such as Amlethus orders for Fengo in Saxo Grammaticus ("extruite rogom: " *Sources of Hamlet*, ed. Gollancz, London, 1926, p. 134). A funeral pyre would be Danish, but Shakespeare, as usual, is making no effort to be Danish.

⁴⁴ Thereby drawing attention to yet a third meaning for "stage": the "stage" of execution (though "scaffold" also may mean the stage of a theatre, as it does in the comparable Prologue to *Henry V*).

⁴⁵ Quoted by Adams, *op. cit.*, p. 285 (from *The Guls Hornbook*, 1609).

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But there is hardly need to quote Dekker when we have Jaques' "All the world's a stage," following upon the Duke's words about "This wide and universal theatre" in *As You Like It*, II, vii, 137 ff., the punning point of which was recaptured by Fleay in 1886.⁴⁶

Thus Shakespeare says again that a tarnished reputation will be refurbished, here and now, in *Hamlet*.

so shall you hear
Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts,
Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters;
Of deaths put on by cunning and forc'd cause,
And, in this upshot, purposes mistook
Fall'n on the inventors' heads; all this can I
Truly deliver.

These lines fit the dramatic situation with almost mathematical exactitude, but they do not do badly for the Essex rebellion either.⁴⁷ The original defence of the Essex party was that their "purposes" had been grossly "mistook," that they had not been guilty of any act of treason. This would be the line that a friend to Essex's memory would therefore take.⁴⁸ And all

⁴⁶ F. G. Fleay, *A Chronicle History of the Life and Work of William Shakespeare* (London, 1886), p. 209. "The comparison of the world to a stage . . . suggests a date subsequent to the building of the Globe, with its motto of *Totus mundus agit historionem*." So Rosencrantz's "Ay, that they do, my lord, Hercules and his load too."

⁴⁷ "Carnal" is as flexible a word as any other here. While Dover Wilson glosses, "fleshly, adulterous," J. Q. Adams takes it as "murderous" (as in *Richard III*, IV, iv, 56), and comments: "And what would Horatio tell? The full guilt of Claudius from beginning to end, but not the secret shame of Gertrude. Hamlet never had revealed that. His mother's great sin died with her." Ed. *Hamlet* (Boston, 1929), p. 332. There were "casual slaughters" on the day of the uprising—the slaying of Essex's page and of several citizens and soldiers. The possibly topical bearing of these lines did not, I find, escape Foard, *op. cit.*, p. 124, though his passing suggestion has gone unheeded, even by Winstanley.

⁴⁸ Robert Prickett expressed himself freely in his publication of 1604, *Honors Fame in Triumph Riding. Or, the Life and Death of the Late Honorable Earle of Essex*:

"He dyde for treason; yet no Traytor. Why?
The treason done, he did it ignorantly.
Intent and purpose in the act.
Is that which makes a Traytors fact."

Grosart's reprint (1881), p. 17. Camden himself said: "This commotion which some call a fear and mistrust, others an oversight; others who censured it more hardly termed it an obstinate impatience, and seeking of revenge; and such as spoke worst of it called it an unadvised and indiscreet rashness, and to this day there are few that ever thought it a capital crime." *Annals*, ed. 1630, bk. iv, p. 178, quoted

knew, and some had seen with their own eyes, how the "purposes mistook" had "fall'n on the inventors' heads" (a grim pun, that!)—bringing death to Essex, Blount, Danvers, and other chief conspirators, bringing imprisonment and disgrace to Shakespeare's patron.

The other point to notice is, of course, the reiteration with which we are told that a tragical history is to be recounted. Again and again the point is made, and now Fortinbras says,

Let us haste to hear it,
And call the noblest to the audience.

The references to the theatre become increasingly plain.

The king-to-be continues,

For me, with sorrow I embrace my fortune;
I have some rights of memory in this kingdom,
Which now to claim my vantage doth invite me.

What "rights" is Fortinbras remembering? We have heard nothing of his rights, and they must remain forever a mystery unless we look beyond the play, for within it there is no explanation to be had; the commentators maintain a prudent silence.⁴⁹ In one sense this would be simply James Stuart's statement that he is entitled to the throne "in this kingdom" of England. "Rights of memory" are "unforgotten rights," going back to the descent of James from Henry VII, the first of the Tudors. But it follows that Shakespeare also has in mind another word, the word he uses ten lines further on: *rites*. In this sense "some rites of memory" are those which James (and Essex's friends generally, including Shakespeare) owe to the memory of the late Earl. (Nor did James prove ungrateful;⁵⁰ one of his first acts, even before he crossed the border, was to order the release of Southampton.) This second meaning

by Charlotte C. Stopes, *The Third Earl of Southampton* (Cambridge, 1922), p. 221. The view persists, *e. g.*, "Robert Essex, den die grausame Herrin hinrichten liess um einiger unbesonnener Redensarten und eines dummen Streiches willen." Hermann Conrad in *Preussische Jahrbucher*, LXXIX (1895), pp. 189-190

⁴⁹ In a recent article William Witherle Lawrence has posed the question and admitted the difficulty of answering it "Hamlet and Fortinbras," *PMLA*, LXI (September, 1946), 685-686.

⁵⁰ In the words of Lord Macaulay, "The new King had always felt kindly towards Lord Essex, and, as soon as he came to the throne, began to show favour to the House of Devereux, and to those who had stood by that house in its adversity." ("Lord Bacon," in *Critical and Historical Essays*, London, 1874, p. 367.)

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thus links up with "Let us haste to hear it, / And call the noblest to the audience."

Horatio then says,

Of that I shall have also cause to speak,
And from his mouth whose voice will draw on more:

Hamlet's voice, yes,⁵¹ but the voice of the popular Earl, who had done what he could to make James king. But finally the persistent theatrical imagery hints at another voice, the Voice of all these voices. Whose voice will "draw on more" than that of the popular dramatist himself?

But let this same be presently perform'd,

Let this same *play* be presently perform'd—

Even while men's minds are wild, lest more mischance
On plots and errors happen.

There have been many futile debates over the word "wild," all of which would have been obviated if it had been understood that these lines were prompted by the Essex uprising and those months of anxiety and disillusion which followed upon it. Shakespeare was "of an age": before widening his claim Ben Jonson calls him "Soul of the age." It is an assumption consistent to the smallest detail that the closing lines of *Hamlet* are "the abstracts and brief chronicles of the time" (II, ii, 555).

Fortinbras now begins the final eulogy.

Let four captains
Bear Hamlet, like a soldier, to the stage.

That is to say (on the level of ambiguity being here considered), put Essex in a play! No one thinks of Hamlet as a soldier. He seems about as far as possible from that. There has been nothing to connect him with the military profession, except one word of Ophelia's in the line, "The courtier's,

⁵¹ In the last scene, and in the last scene only, stress is laid on "this kingdom" as an elective monarchy—for presumably a very special reason. The explanation lies latent in these words of Dover Wilson's. "After all, was not the monarchy of Elizabeth and James an 'elective' one? The latter like Claudius owed his throne to the deliberate choice of the Council, while the Council saw to it that he had the 'dying voice' of Elizabeth, as Fortinbras has that of Hamlet." *Hamlet*, p. lv.

soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword" (III, i, 160). But "the general of our gracious empress," everybody knows and everybody knew, was a soldier *par excellence*. Even his jealous rival-in-command at Cadiz, Lord Howard, acknowledged him "a great soldier."⁵² Moreover, to come back to Ophelia's line,

The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword

—it fits Essex in a way that has not been hitherto suspected. As part of the Accession Day celebrations in 1595, Francis Bacon wrote an allegory concerning Essex which was presented before the Queen and many spectators.⁵³ Essex was met by "a melancholy, dreaming hermit, a mutinous, brain-sick soldier, and a busy, tedious secretary," representing the three divergent ambitions of that noble lord, and after supper each of the characters in turn delivered a pretty speech, the cloistered scholar calling him to the Muses, the courtier begging him to attend to matters of state, and the soldier urging him to seek his fortune in the field.

For he was likely, had he been put on,
To have prov'd most royally:

This is most daring, but protected of course by its ambiguity of reference. "All the world's a stage" now, and Essex, "had he been put on," would have proved a worthy king of England.

and, for his passage,
The soldiers' music and the rites of war
Speak loudly for him.

Ostensibly "passage" means departure, death, and "Speak" is a word of command. But "passage" can also mean "conduct" (e.g., "passages of life," *I Henry IV*, III, ii, 8), and "Speak" can be indicative, with "rites" being turned back to "rights":⁵⁴ the soldiers' music and the rights of war speak loudly for the good conduct of the Earl of Essex: he deserved a better death.

Take up the bodies:

⁵² Strachey, p. 106.

⁵³ See Bacon's *Works*, ed. Basil Montagu (Philadelphia, 1857), II, 533-536; see also Harrison, *Essex*, pp 90-91. In "The Statesman's Speech" is the advice, "To conclude, let him be true to himself."

⁵⁴ The Quartos and Folios very naturally confuse the homonyms, the Quartos reading "right" (singular) here, while ten lines above, the Folios have "rites."

who spoke out reassuringly at a time when men's minds were wild, paying his respects to a popular idol and prophesying an untroubled succession for James.

PART TWO

It seems to me that there are four principal objections to be urged against the theory: first (and this is beyond dispute), that it has not been proved; secondly, that it outrages our critical sensibilities by being in its comparison of characters and circumstances too crude; thirdly, that in other ways it is too ingenious (where a simple and natural explanation is at hand); and fourthly, that even if Shakespeare had had the sympathies postulated he would not have dared to give even covert expression to them.

The burden of proof lies with the other side, and for many skeptics the failure of the data and the arguments stemming therefrom to add up to proof will be in itself a sufficient objection. Such readers might be willing to entertain, perhaps have entertained in the past, on much more slender evidence, a theory about Lyly's *Endymion*, or indeed *Love's Labour's Lost*. But *Hamlet*, if mysterious at all, is not mysterious in the way that those plays are—it is sufficient unto itself as a drama—and to weave a web of double meanings around it seems idle, an effect without a proper cause. (A more prudent question is how much one would grant in the way of an occasional cobweb, a topical allusion here and there, with perhaps a cluster of them at the end?)

What would impress us? Short of an unequivocal statement of intention from Shakespeare himself, we should at least require a contemporary reference that made the Hamlet-Essex equation (though it could still be argued that an innocent play was being taken topically). The nearest I have been able to come to such evidence is in two references to the late Earl that connect him, in the most casual way, with the plot of *Hamlet*, not necessarily Shakespeare's.⁵⁵ Indeed, there are no

⁵⁵ There is this stanza in "Verses upon the report of the death of the right Honorable the Lord of Essex," a ballad which clumsily attains to 792 lines:

"I cannot sleepe one winke, thy troubled spirit
Doth still pursue me wheresoere I goe.
I cannot rest by day, nor sleepe by night,

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certain allusions to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* before 1604 (the Gabriel Harvey note—see above, footnote 3—being of undetermined date). For all that may be said, ruefully, about the accidental character of such survivals, the most that the other side can postulate is that there was a sly understanding that did not cause much of a flurry. If the play had been a *cause célèbre* reaching the Privy Council, we should surely have heard.

In passing on to the second main objection it is important to note what advantage the theory is taking of our special ignorances—our uncertainty in regard to the date of the play and our ignorance of its immediate source. Date the play a few months earlier than I date it, and my interpretation of the ending becomes impossible. As for the *Ur-Hamlet*, no one has taken kindly to the suggestion of the original propounder of the Essex theory⁵⁶ that Shakespeare himself wrote the *Ur-Hamlet* in 1589, capitalising on the interest in things Danish resulting from the marriage of James in that year to Anne of Denmark, and that the 1603 Quarto represents an intermediate version that would yet again be revised. Rejecting this hypothesis, we are left with a textual mystery, and of course know nothing about Shakespeare's major source except that it contained a ghost that cried Revenge. How close was it to the present plot? Did it contain a rebellion and other matters that are being laid to the ghost of Essex? One can always ask, too, why the Essex connections, if intended, are not closer. If the Earl of Leicester's poisoning of the first Earl of Essex is really being recalled, the elder Hamlet should have died, not from poison in his ears but in his food. "But after all, Shakespeare had to consider dramatic effect, was primarily, let us never forget,

Thy Ghost still asks me what I meane to doe.
Reuenge! Reuenge! nought but reuenge I heare;
Reuenge! thy Ghost still soundeth in myne eare."

Ballads from Manuscripts, ed. W. R. Morfill (Hertford, the Ballad Society), II, 224. Sir Thomas Smithes *Voyage and Entertainment in Rushia* (London, 1605) contains three references to Essex, in one of which his conspiracy is compared with a contemporary Russian conspiracy. The rebelling Prince says (sig. K) "his fathers Empire and Government, was but as the *Poeticall Furie in a Stage-action*, compleat yet with horrid and wofull Tragedies: a first, but no second to any *Hamlet*; and that now *Revenge*, just *Revenge* was comming with his Sworde drawne against him, his royall Mother, and dearest Sister, to fill up those Murdering Sceanes," etc.

⁵⁶ See Foard's article, as cited above, footnote 1.

writing a play," the other side will point out—thereby having it both ways. It may be so, but poisoning and other elements possibly introduced by Shakespeare into the plot are too commonplace, especially when one thinks of Italianate influences, for anyone to wonder much about a particular source for them.

Moreover, if Shakespeare was leaving us a "signature" in "Absent thee from felicity awhile," he had another opportunity that he very strangely passed by. Essex was thirty-three when he died. It would not have affected the dramatic structure one whit to make the gravedigger give the figure for Hamlet's age as "three-and-thirty" instead of "thirty." The dramatist's failure to give us a hint in this relatively safe yet pointed way counts, in my mind, heavily against the theory. If ever there was an opportunity for a topical allusion, that was it, and a round number in the midst of what seems to be otherwise careful arithmetic in the 2nd Quarto and 1st Folio (Yorick's skull lying "i' the earth three-and-twenty years") can hardly be made to serve.

But here higher truths intervene, as they do with Hamlet's character. The figures for the hero's age belie our total impression, just as no one functioning as a critic is going to be content to call Hamlet "a woman-hater." It is always embarrassing to compare the transformed character in a play or story with its original, even when there is known to be that relationship. To premise such a relationship is doubly embarrassing, and perhaps, in the light of the procrustean crudities that will inevitably result, inexcusable. The lines are, at best, to be faintly drawn, and then they may fit others just as well. As a colleague remarks, if this is the game we are playing, a good case could be made out — so far as character goes — for John Donne as the original of Hamlet! (And here the ages fit!)

Thirdly, let us approach the details of the ending more openly. In an actual performance—and that is the test—who finds anything odd in the line, "I am dead, Horatio. Wretched queen, adieu!"? Did Shakespeare ever dream that we should dwell on Hamlet's switch from "mother" to "queen"? It could be chance, or ceremony, or, if we are bent on extracting something from it, a subtle indication that Hamlet's problem has finally been resolved—that he feels free at last. As for a dying character saying adieu to a dead one. the

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queen has just fallen, and events are crowding one upon another fast: we may separate them as readers, weighing intervals, but this we cannot do as spectators. Bradley in his study may be disturbed and offer an untenable explanation: "he remembers his wretched mother and bids her adieu, ignorant that she has preceded him."⁵⁷ This assumes that Hamlet is not in command of his faculties. All that he yet says and does nobly refutes any such notion. Say rather that the solution of this and other questions is to get the play out of the study and onto the stage, where such questions will not be raised.

Looking at it from this angle we shall not brood, either, over

I cannot live to hear the news from England,
But I do prophesy the election lights
On Fortinbras.

The words are in response to Osric's explanation of the "war-like noise":

Young Fortinbras, with conquest come from Poland,
To the ambassadors of England gives
This war-like volley.

Maybe, *sub specie aeternitatis*, Hamlet ough not to waste his last energies by showing interest in the fairly certain fate of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (though that, too, can be argued and one can say that he takes a certain pride in the way he has outwitted his enemies). But from a playwright's point of view, it is perfectly natural, when these separate arrivals have just been announced, for Hamlet to mention them both and, moreover, distinguish between them. For the "But" can be taken as putting "the news from England" in its proper subordinate place: "I cannot live to hear the news from England (and I do not care about that), but (to pass on to what really matters), I do prophesy, etc."

It is enough to indicate thus the direction a protest against "unfair" questions (the kind that gives lunatics and theorists their opportunities) may take: Shakespeare wrote *currente calamo* a play that was never meant to be pondered over

⁵⁷ Bradley, *op. cit.*, p. 147. Harley Granville-Barker, ignoring all indications that the queen is dead, presents us at this juncture with a "still-agonizing mother." "Speechless, she can yet have heard all; at the end nothing has been spared her." *Prefaces to Shakespeare*, I (Princeton, 1946), p. 156.

minutely; matters puzzling the overattentive student (when the student *is* being overattentive, not simply inattentive) originated in dramaturgical convenience or dramaturgical carelessness. So it is with what is doubtless the biggest crux here, Fortinbras' accession to the Danish throne: ⁵⁸ Shakespeare at the last minute assigns him "rights of memory in this kingdom" in order to justify the claim. We are in a theatre, not a courtroom, and it is idle—though a characteristic scholarly error—to ask for documentation. It is like asking what songs the sirens sang, or what happened to Lady Macbeth's children, or to Cassio's wife.

Finally, even if we allow Shakespeare the personal or political sympathies postulated, how could he have dared to be understood as expressing them? Never at any time did the Queen permit the question of the succession to be discussed, and of course to say of Essex, after his rebellion,

For he was likely, had he been put on,
To have prov'd most royally:

was to lay oneself open to the charge of treason. In two popular, oft reprinted poems Shakespeare had declared himself a follower of the now convicted and imprisoned Southampton, and the dramatist had openly admired Essex. Moreover, the traitorous use to which *Richard II* had been put on the eve of the conspiracy had called for close questioning of Shakespeare's company. For a man so suspect to take further risks in those arbitrary times seems little less than suicidal. Indeed, the need for craft and caution in public utterances did not cease with the reign of James, as is shown by the case of Samuel Daniel, who, when his drama *Philotas* was published in 1605, had to answer charges before the privy council that that play dealt sympathetically with the Essex rebellion. He was fortunately able to show "that the first three acts had been read by the master of the revels and Lord Mountjoy" in 1600, before the rebellion.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Perhaps an explanation quite good enough is that furnished by G. B. Harrison in his recent edition of the *Major Plays and the Sonnets* (New York, 1948), p. 654, that "with the disappearance of all the family of the original King Hamlet the situation reverts to what it was before the death of Fortinbras' father. See I, i, 80-95"

⁵⁹ *D. N. B.*, XIV, 28

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On the other hand, it was permissible and even customary in those last two years of the Queen's reign to refer to the late popular Earl (even in letters to the Earl's traditional enemy Sir Robert Cecil) with regretful respect. Eighteen months after the execution a German visitor found "Essex' Last Good-night" was still being sung—even at Court!⁶⁰ To pass over this and other anonymous eulogies, the second year of the new monarch's reign, the year of the 2nd Quarto, saw the publication of Robert Pricket's *Honors Faine in Triumph Riding, or, the Life and Death of the Late Honorable Earle of Essex*, which hints that the Earl was the victim of the machinations of his enemies and stoutly declares:

It's false to say, hee would a King have bin:
From faith & honor he made no such digression:
His heart was cleare from such so foule a sin,
He always stood for this approv'd Succession,
Which happily doeth now the Throne possesse:
Heavens mighty God protect his Mightinesse.
Dead Earle, amidst bright Angels wings,
Amen thy heavenly Spirit sings.⁶¹

It was evidently with reference to this poem that Francis Morice wrote to Sir B. Gawdy: "well and feelingly written and I think will not hereafter to be had as they are already called in and the printer called in question."⁶² Pricket went to prison for his poem, only to be released soon after by appealing to Lord Salisbury.⁶³

Indeed the picture of the censorship at this period is full of contradictions. In March of the year in which Daniel was charged and the three authors of *Eastward Hoe* imprisoned, it was recorded that the players do not "forbear to present upon their stage the whole course of the present Time, not sparing either King, State, or Religion, in so great Absurdity, and with such Liberty, that any would be afraid to hear them."⁶⁴

If Shakespeare had been taken to task for *Hamlet*, he could have replied that he was just revising an old play, dating back

⁶⁰ J. E. Neal, *Queen Elizabeth* (London, 1934), p. 379.

⁶¹ Ed. Grosart, p. 20.

⁶² Historical MSS. Commission, *Gawdy MSS.* (1885), p. 92.

⁶³ *D. N. B.*, XLVI, 348.

⁶⁴ Winwood's *Memorials*, II, 54, cited by Virginita C. Gildersleeve, *Government Regulation of the Elizabethan Drama* (New York, 1908), p. 101.

to the 80's; besides (the other side will continue), his ambiguity at the end is very clever and "unconvictable," as is shown by its failure to trouble modern scholars. Moreover, he had himself found censorship a whimsical thing and was evidently willing to take his chances with it. There is one conspicuous case where it was exceedingly vigilant with him, and one conspicuous case where it was exceedingly relaxed. The case of vigilance is the 1600 quarto of *II Henry IV*,⁶⁵ where such lines as IV, i, 55-79, doubtless written in all innocence, were apparently taken by the censor months later as referring to Essex and struck out, and indeed the whole play was mutilated.

Yet in the 1598 quarto of *I Henry IV* Shakespeare turned a compliment to the Queen into a hit, and the censor let it pass. It was all right for Falstaff to say (I, ii, 28 ff.), "let us be Diana's foresters, gentlemen of the shade, minions of the moon; and let men say, we be men of good government, being governed as the sea is, by our noble and chaste mistress the moon, under whose countenance we steal." This is a compliment followed by a harmless jest. But the Prince's reply is something else again: "Thou sayest well, and it holds well too; for the fortune of us that are the moon's men doth ebb and flow like the sea, being governed as the sea is, by the moon." This is a glance at the well known uncertainty of the Queen's favor. As Dover Wilson remarks in his edition,⁶⁶ "Diana being a common title for Elizabeth, this talk about 'minions of the moon' seems pretty daring, esp. as it exactly describes the condition of her favorites."⁶⁷

What then are we to conclude? On May 10, 1601, "the Privy Council wrote to certain Justices of the Peace in Middlesex, concerning the players at the Curtain, who, it was reported, were representing upon the stage in their interludes 'the persons of some gentlemen of good desert and quallity that

⁶⁵ See Alfred Hart, *Shakespeare and the Homilies* (Melbourne, 1934), pp. 154-218.

⁶⁶ Cambridge, 1946, p. 120.

⁶⁷ On Elizabeth as Diana or Cynthia or "the Mortal moon" in the flattery or allusions of the time, see Elkin C. Wilson, *England's Eliza* (Cambridge, Mass., 1939), Ch. V, "Diana"; also the present writer, *Endymion in England* (New York, 1944), Ch. III, "Endymion in Court Intrigue." N. J. Halpin thought not only that the "fair vestal throned by the west" of *M.N.D.*, II, i, 158 ff., was Queen Elizabeth but that the "little western flower" was none other than the first Lady Essex (*Oberon's Vision in the Midsummer-Night's Dream*, London, 1843).

are yet alive under obscure manner, but yet in such sorte as all the hearers may take notice both of the matter and the persons that are meant thereby.'"⁶⁸ Did this boldness of the players at the Curtain (about which we hear nothing further) give Shakespeare, about to compose his version of *Hamlet*, his cue to go and do likewise? Or did he, on the contrary, take warning from such scandalous examples and their usual high price in punishment?

On the whole, the odds are against his taking the calculated risk. He will capitalise on current events so far as to have a rebellion in his play, but he will be careful to put it down with

There's such divinity doth hedge a king,
That treason can but peep to what it would,
Acts little of his will. (IV, v, 123-125.)

The lines are so grand that one can forget it is a villain who says them.

Two lesser alternatives may stem from my examination of the ending. Shakespeare may be thinking of James in giving a prince from another country the throne, without especially having Essex in mind as Hamlet (though the dual reference, as the stanza from Pricket further shows, would seem almost inevitable). Or, putting all politics aside, it may be granted that the author in his constant theatrical imagery and terminology is referring, as he concludes his play, to his own art. And that by itself would be a fact of no small interest.

A final possibility is that, even as his sonnets may be imagined as having had both a public and a private meaning, so Shakespeare here *was* making the dual reference, but privately, or for the initiated few, without intending to be—and without being—understood by “the general.”

One can only end by reiterating that the burden of proof lies with the other side, whereas what we have from there consists of suspicions based on circumstantial evidence. Perhaps the overall moral is that we ought not to consider *Hamlet* too curiously. Once we start, we shall be led, link by link, to strange historical conclusions.

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⁶⁸ Gildersleeve, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

THE ACCENTUAL THEORY OF HEBREW PROSODY: A FURTHER STUDY IN RENAISSANCE INTER- PRETATION OF BIBLICAL FORM

By ISRAEL BAROWAY

1

If Sidney's celebrated "'tis not rhyming and versing that maketh the poet" epitomizes the general tradition of the English Renaissance, no less does his less famous "the Senate of Poets hath chosen verse as their fittest rayment. . . ." ¹ Verse was not a *sine qua non* of imaginative literature, but it enhanced imaginative revelation. This view applied to sacred as well as to secular literature: the Bible, transcendently poetic by poesy's every test, ² pulsated rhythmically under the divine passion, even though translation had obliterated the Hebrew cadences and time had erased the memory of their shaping principles. These cadences and these principles challenged the curiosity of the literary explorer of the Renaissance.

Some of his "discoveries" have already been noted. All criticism agreed that there was a science of Hebrew prosody; but the interpretation varied. The earliest and most pervasive was the quantitative interpretation, originated by Philo and Josephus, transmitted by the Church Fathers, and epitomized, in the seventeenth century, by the "scientific" authentication of Gomarus. ³ A later and sounder interpretation, beginning in the sixteenth century, challenged the validity of this classical view. The present study proposes to investigate some facets of this challenge.

A word about its scope. It does not presume to trace evolutionary developments or direct influences or to appraise, beyond the demands of lucid exposition, the scholarly validity of the

¹ Sir Philip Sidney, "An Apology for Poetry," *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, ed. Smith, 2.160.

² I Baroway, "The Bible as Poetry in the English Renaissance," *JEGP* 32 (1933), 447-72.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 472-80; cf. also the writer's two articles, "The Hebrew Hexameter . . ." *ELH* 2 (1935), 66-91 and "The Lyre of David. . . ." *ELH* 8 (1941), 119-142.

challenge. It proposes (1) to explore backgrounds as an orientation for further investigation of the "accentual" school of interpretation, embodied mainly in the work of Wither; (2) to present several significant phases of the newer interpretation, as revealed on the continent; (3) to demonstrate English participation in the movement; (4) in general, to reveal something of the soil from which flowered more recent interpretations of biblical prosody. As another link in a chain of studies about the Bible in the Renaissance, it hopes to show one more direction of that aesthetic compulsion which drove the man of letters into the awesome realm of the Sacred Word. If Tremellius or Steuchus or Scaliger or Vossius or Wither, following a new vision, sees it imperfectly, other critics, in other areas of Renaissance literary history, did so too; the daring and the groping are as revealing as the vision of the gleam. And if the details of their criticism seem naive to modern scholarship, these men, as critics, see more truly than did the supporters of the quantitative tradition, including the redoubtable Gomarus, for all his "steadfast rules" that gave "exactitude" and "perfection" to the quantitative principle. These men perceive that Hebrew prosody is governed by some kind of accentual principle; they seem dimly to perceive the parallel structure of Hebrew verse; they perceive, even though they may not apprehend clearly, the free accentual rhythm of Hebrew verse. And, above all, they realize that they do not have the final answer. This way lies truth.

2

Ultimately, of course, the source of Semitic scholarship in the Renaissance is Jewish. Though the province of Hebrew studies in the English Renaissance is a very dark area of cultural history, it seems reasonably well established that the contributions of rabbinical scholars like Levita and David Kimchi in Hebrew grammar or of Kimchi and Rashi in the interpretation of biblical Hebrew were primary and germinal; and that such scholarship was channeled to Christendom through converts like Tremellius, as well as by Christian Hebraists.⁴ At another time, I propose to elaborate the subject

⁴S. A. Hirsch, "Early English Hebraists . . . Johann Reuchlin," *A Book of*

of Hebrew studies in Tudor-Stuart England; for the present, it is sufficient to suggest that the accentual theory may have entered England through such lexical works as Pagninus' *Thesaurus Linguae Sanctae*⁵ and Buxorf's *Thesaurus Grammaticus Linguae Sanctae*,⁶ which, respectively, had been reprinted five times from 1579 to 1614 and five times from 1609 to 1650,⁷ and which had cited a number of rabbinical writers, grammarians, and poets who had either expounded biblical versification or had shaped later Hebrew prosody, from the tenth century on, in its clear modern accentual direction: Ibn Librat of Bagdad (tenth century); Ibn Gabirol and Jehudah Halevy (Spanish poets of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, respectively); Abraham Ibn Ezra (twelfth century wandering scholar); Ibn Yachya (fifteenth century Portuguese grammarian); and Ibn Chabib (fifteenth century resident of Lisbon, the Levant and southern Italy), who, as we shall see, was Steuchus' authority on Hebrew prosody.⁸ It is significant that Buxorf's text was used by grammar school students, in 1636, at Rotherham School and possibly at other schools taught by Charles Hoole.⁹ And though Wither's treatment of biblical metrics does not cite these particular sources, it does refer, marginally or textually, to the rabbinical David Kimchi, Maimonides, Jonathan ben Uzziel, Rashi, "Rabbi Barachias," and other unidentified "Rabbines."¹⁰ Moreover, examination of the second Bodleian Catalogue shows that a wide variety of

Essays, London, 1925, pp. 116-59; David Daiches, *The King James Version of the Bible* . . . Chicago, 1941; E. I. Rosenthal, *Rashi and the English Bible*, Manchester, 1940; Harris Fletcher, *The Use of the Bible in Milton's Prose*, Urbana, 1929.

⁵ Sanctes Pagninus, *Thesaurus Linguae Sanctae*, Leyden, 1529; I have examined the Paris edition of 1548, published by Robertus Stephanus.

⁶ Johann Buxorf, *Tractatus Brevis de Prosodia Metrica*, Book II of *Thesaurus Grammaticus Linguae Sanctae*, Bale, 1609, pp. 578-611.

⁷ Wilhelm Bacher, "Hebrew Dictionaries," *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, New York, 1901-1906, 4: 582, and "Hebrew Grammars," *Ibid.*, 6: 74, based upon M. Steinschneider, *Bibliographisches Handbuch* . . . , Leipzig, 1859, and his "Zusätze . . . , *Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen* 13 (1896), 345-79 and 441-89 and N. Porges, "Nachträge zu Steinschneiders Zusätzen und Berichtigungen . . . , *Ibid.*, 15 (1898), 493-508, which I have also consulted.

⁸ Pagninus, *op. cit.*, p. 1; Buxorf, *op. cit.*, pp. 582-609, *passim*.

⁹ Charles Hoole, *A New Discovery of the Old Arte of Teaching Schoole* . . . , ed. Thiselton Mark, Syracuse, 1912, p. 217.

¹⁰ George Wither, *A Preparation to the Psalter* (1619) (Spenser Society, No. 37, Manchester, 1884), *passim*. "Rabbi Barachias" may be Ibn Baruch or Baruch of Benevento.

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Hebrew works was available to English students of Hebrew a year after Wither published his treatise: commentaries by Rashi, Levi ben Gerson, Abarbanel, Ibn Ezra, Maimonides, Nachmanides, Menachem Recanati; grammatical texts by Levita; grammatical and lexical works by David and Moses Kimchi,¹¹ as well as a diversity of grammars, lexicons, and biblical texts and exegeses, from Reuchlin, Münster, Pagninus, and Montanus to Tremellius, Steuchus, Buxtorf, and J. J. Scaliger.¹²

With many learned sources already accessible, the Elizabethan and Jacobean were not forced to accept blindly the patristic postulates. Sidney's observation, in the early 1580's, that Hebrew poems—the *Psalms*, Solomon's *Song of Songs*, *Ecclesiastes*, and *Proverbs*, as well as *Job* and the songs of Moses and Deborah—were "fully written in meeter, as all learned Hebricians agree, although the rules be not fully found,"¹³ suggests acquaintance with the conflicting scholarly currents; indeed, Sidney may have been questioning the quantitative principle itself, since his only specific ascription of source, Tremellius, almost certainly regards Hebrew verse as accentual;¹⁴ and, as we shall see, a forthright challenge to the quantitative tradition had been published in France, in 1578, when Sidney was there. In 1591, John Harington, too, may be suggesting the same conflicting views and surely is following either Tremellius or Sidney when he says:

some part of the Scripture was written in verse, as the Psalmes of *David* & certain other songs of *Deborah*, of *Salomon* & others, which the learnedest diuines doe affirme to be verse and finde they are in meeter, though the rule of the Hebrew verse they agree not on.
 . . .¹⁵

In 1589, the author of *The Arte of English Poesie* notes not only meter but "a maner of rime, as hath bene of late obserued

¹¹ Thomas James, *Catalogus Universalis Librorum Bibliothecae Bodleianae* . . . Oxford, 1620, *passim*.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Sidney, *op. cit.*, 1. 155; 1. 158.

¹⁴ Cf. footnotes 22-26, inclusive, and accompanying text.

¹⁵ John Harington, "A Brief Apology for Poetry," *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, *op. cit.*, 2. 207.

by learned men.”¹⁶ By 1619, when *A Preparation to the Psalter* observes that

the auncient Iewes had both such kinde of Verses, as some of ours are and the same freedom in their composures that we use,¹⁷

it would appear that the challenge to the classical view had entered the secular stream—even though reference to Hebrew prosody remains rare and incidental to other considerations.

Whatever the original source of the challenge—rabbinic or otherwise—there was recognition, even in the patristic tradition, of a difference between Hebrew and classical versification. As early as the first century of the common era, Origen had observed it:

Now the verses among the Hebrews are different from those among us.¹⁸

Even Jerome, probably the major patristic influence upon the quantitative tradition, had noted that *Job* was composed, mainly, in what I have termed, in another place, quantitative (hexameter) “rhythm,” as distinguished from quantitative “metre.”¹⁹ But, more significantly, he had also observed that *Job* sometimes released itself from the law of quantity altogether into what he, himself, calls a “rhythm,” “composed of *numbers* freed from the law of metre”²⁰—into “rhythm,” or “numbers” that must be accentual, since it is not quanti-

¹⁶ “The Arte of English Poesie,” *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, *op cit.*, 2.10. Italics are mine.

¹⁷ Wither, *op cit.*, p. 61.

¹⁸ Origen, *Analecta Sacra*, ed. Joannes Baptista Card. Pitra (Paris, 1876-92, 7 vols.), 2 341: *οἱ στίχοι οὖν, οἱ παρ' Ἑβραίοις, ἕτεροί εἰσιν παρὰ τοὺς παρ' ἡμῖν.*

¹⁹ A distinction in Quintilian, between rhythm and metre, is that rhythm observes the quantity of the foot, but not the order of the syllables of the foot. Thus, hexameter rhythm need not run in dactyls and spondees, so long as the feet maintain the dactyl-spondee quantity; a free interjection of ascending anaepests among the descending dactyls and an indiscriminate use of spondees would combine to form a hexameter rhythm. (Hexametri versus sunt, dactylo spondeoque currentes, et propter linguae idioma crebro recipientes et alios pedes, non earundem syllabarum, sed eorundem temporum), in Jerome, “In Librum Job (Praefatio),” *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J. P. Migne, Paris, 1844-88, 28 1082. Cf. “The Hebrew Hexameter,” *op cit.*, pp. 84-5. Jerome does not call this kind of verse “rythmus”; I have applied the Quintilianic term to it.

²⁰ Jerome, “In Librum Job (Praefatio),” *Scripturae Sacrae Cursus Completus*, ed. J. P. Migne, Paris, 13 275. “Interdum quoque *rythmus* ipse dulcis et tinnulus fertur *numerus* lege metri solutis; quod metrici magis quam simplex lector intelligunt.” Italics are mine.

tative. "Rhythm," or "numbers," bears in the middle ages and in the Renaissance, a special meaning, to be elaborated later, by Scaliger and Vossius, and by Du Cange. As expounded by Augustine and Bede, this interpretation of "rhythm" and "numbers" colors the nature of the accentual interpretation of both Scaliger and Vossius. Briefly, it differentiates "rhythm," or "numbers," from "metre" thus: "rhythm," or "numbers," merely counts the *number* of the syllables in a given foot, but does not, like "metre," observe the quantity of these syllables.²¹ This may well be what Jerome meant by "rhythm," by "numbers freed from the law of metre" (*rythmus . . . numeris lege metri solutis*), as distinguished from quantity in *Job* (*dactylo-spondeoque currentes . . . et alios pedes, non earundem syllabarum, sed eorundem temporum*). This, probably, is what Tremellius meant by saying that the Psalms, and other poems "*sunt rhythmici; non prosa oratione scripti . . . sed numeris adstricti ad commoditatem memoriae & cantus.*"²² Hence, this is probably Sidney's inference about the nature of biblical prosody when he identified, as lyric verse, the *Psalms*, the books of Solomon, *Job*, and the songs of Deborah and Moses, "which beside other, the learned *Emmanuel Tremellius* and *Franciscus Iunius* doe entitle the poetickall part of Scripture."²³ Tremellius, Professor of Hebrew at Cambridge and translator of the Hebrew Old Testament into Latin, refers (in Sidney's source, the preface to his poetic division of the Old Testament), not to compositions in "measure," or "quantity," but in "rhythm" and "numbers," organized for "memory and singing." The poems, indeed, are suitably "numbered" so that they may be sung in religious worship: ²⁴ the phrasing suggests a verse similar in principle to

²¹ Cf. text to notes 42 (Scaliger); 50 and 56 (Vossius); 58 (Du Cange).

²² *Testamenti Veteris Biblia Sacra*, . . . Latini recens ex Hebraeo facti brevibusque Scholiis illustrati ab Immanuele Tremellio & Francisco Iunio (Geneva, 1590), (the earliest edition I have seen) Pars Tertia, p. A3: . . . Itaque hos libros omnes communiter vocamus Psalmos, quia sunt rhythmi; non prosa oratione scripti, ut omnes alii (etsi in his *Cantica quaedam exstant elegantissima Moschis, Deborah, Davidis, Jeschahjae, Jechizkijae, Jirmejae, & Chabbakkuki inspersa*) sed numeris adstricti ad commoditatem memoriae & cantus . . .

²³ Sidney, *op. cit.*, 1.158. Italics are mine. Cf. my article, "Tremellius, Sidney, and Biblical Verse," *MLN* 49 (1934), 146-7, about Sidney's identification of these poems as lyric verse. Junius' main contribution to the Tremellius Bible was that of an editor.

²⁴ *Testamenti Veteris* . . . , *op. cit.*, p. A3. Tertium [the third division of

that which the Christian Church introduced into Western literature and into its own religious service—the non-quantitative accented, numbered modern verse. So interpreted, the Tremellius Old Testament would have diffused the accentual interpretation widely throughout England and the continent: published originally in 1575-79 at Frankfort and in 1580 at London and in many later editions,²⁵ the Tremellius Old Testament—with the New Testament and Apocrypha—became “almost as standard a Latin translation for the Protestant as the Vulgate long before had become for the Catholic.”²⁶

Though the primary derivation and the exact evolution of the accentual interpretation of biblical verse lie in the shadows, the interpretation itself was manifestly known in England by the 80's. In the year 1578,—during the period that Tremellius was publishing his Latin Old Testament with its preface (1575-79), and in the very year that Sidney was on his mission in France²⁷—the works of Augustinus Steuchus (1496-1549), famous Italian churchman, director of the Vatican library, and delegate to the Tredentine Council, were being published in France.²⁸ Steuchus clearly repudiated the quantitative tradition—and he did so upon Jewish authority, the *Darke No'Am* of Rabbi Moses Ba'al Shem-Tob Ibn Chabib; Ibn Chabib had not only lived in Italy, but his “summary of Hebrew poetics and versification based on Aristotle's ‘Poetics,’” had been published (with the grammar, *Marpe Lashon*), at Venice, in 1506.²⁹ Though I find

Scripture] vero genus est Psalmorum, hoc est, librorum in quibus res a Mosche Prophetisque traditae & sancto Dei Spiritu testatae *aptis numeris* exponuntur . . . hi [the poetic books] vero *numerosa* & brevi ad memoriam, figurata ad vim & efficacitatem oratione protulerunt eadem documenta voluntatis Dei. . . . Nam libros qui a Davidi aliisque viris Dei fuerunt traditi *ut in Ecclesia canerentur*, eos . . . singulariter Psalmos dici & dicendos esse agnoscimus. . . . (Italics are mine).

²⁵ *Jew. Ency.*, *op. cit.*, 12 240

²⁶ Fletcher, *op. cit.*, p. 52 Tremellius taught Hebrew not only at Cambridge but at Strasburg, Heidelberg, and the College of Sedan

²⁷ M. J. Wallace, *The Life of Sir Philip Sidney*, Cambridge, 1915, pp. 202-3.

²⁸ *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 14. 292-3. His works were edited in three volumes, Paris, 1578; Venice, 1591 and 1601. I have been unable to find an original edition of his works. Quotations from Steuchus derive from Franciscus Gomarus, *Davidis Lyra*. Lugduni Batavorum, 1637, in *Thesaurus Antiquitatum Sacrarum* . . . ed. Blasius Ugolinus, *Opera*, v. 31, Venice, 1766.

²⁹ *Jew. Ency.*, *op. cit.*, 6. 125 It had appeared, earlier, in Constantinople about 1520. I have not seen a sixteenth century edition but have examined the (Roedelheim), Heidenheim-Baschwitz edition, 1806, printed with the *Marpe Lashon*.

no direct documentary debt of Sidney to Steuchus and, hence, to Ibn Chabib, it is not impossible that an accentual tradition stemmed from Ibn Chabib, the Italian resident in the early sixteenth century; to Tremellius, the Italian Jew, who had become a Catholic, in 1540, during the lifetime of Steuchus;³⁰ to Steuchus, the Catholic scholar; and from Tremellius and Steuchus to Sidney. Sidney's direct debt to Tremellius has been shown. His acquaintance with Steuchus is circumstantially probable: he was a friend of notable scholar-printers of Europe;³¹ his circle of acquaintances included antiquarians, divines, theological controversialists, and Archbishop Parker, leading spirit of the Bishops' translation, had been a close friend of his father;³² he was in France during the publication of Steuchus' works. Even at the Universities, the young Sidney had had opportunities to learn about currents of biblical scholarship: during his residence at Oxford,³³ there existed a Professorship of Hebrew;³⁴ at Cambridge—which he probably attended sometime between 1570-72³⁵—he could have found a special incentive, for the distinguished Tremellius tradition was being carried on, from 1569 to 1572, presumably, by Tremellius' son-in-law, Antoine Chevalier, not only a Hebraist of international repute but a famous French Protestant refugee, as well.³⁶ It is even conceivable that Sidney's interest in the accentual Hebrew versification may account, in part, for his metrical translation of 40-odd Psalms—as a demonstration to “quantitative” translators like Stanyhurst that accentual English verse was the English counterpart of Hebrew verse and, hence, the proper medium for translating biblical poetry.³⁷

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.240.

³¹ Wallace, *op. cit.*, pp. 124-26

³² *Ibid.*, p. 98; pp. 101-3; pp. 109-10; p. 149.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 88 and p. 105.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 88; p. 105; p. 107.

³⁶ DNB, 4.125; Daiches, *op. cit.*, pp. 144-5; J. B. Mullinger, *The University of Cambridge from the Royal Injunctions of 1535 . . . to . . . Charles I*, Cambridge, 1884, pp. 416-17; *La Grande Encyclopedie*, 10 1145.

³⁷ On another occasion, I wish to explore the possibility that Sidney's reason for rendering the Psalms into verse was not simply to console his depression or banishment (Mona Wilson, *Sir Philip Sidney*, Oxford, 1931) or to correct the current crop of poor translations (Wallace, *op. cit.*) or to satisfy his pleasure at the close contemplation of the Psalms (C. H. Warren, *Sir Philip Sidney* . . . , London and New York, 1936). It may be that, having completed his experimentation with

However vague Sidney's relationship to Steuchus, the interpretation of the Italian scholar is clearly non-quantitative, "rhythmical" as opposed to "metrical," and inferentially accentual. Gomarus informs us that Steuchus, on the authority of Rabbi Ibn Chabib, anticipates other critics of biblical prosody:

And those people [more recent scholars] the learned man Augustinus Steuchus, Bishop of Eugubinus, appears to anticipate [following Rabbi Moses ben Chabib in his book *Darke No'Am*, or *Prosody*], when, in his preface to the Psalms, he says as follows: *Moses, the most ancient of all, sang a song to God; but that true poems, bound by metrical laws, are to be found in Holy Scriptures he hardly admits. For a little later he explains his opinion more fully. Hebrew poetry, however, is not the same as that of the Greeks and the Latins: as neither the Italian, nor the Etruscan is the same as the Latin. Hebrew is similar to the Italian, rather than to the Latin. The Latin, imitating the Greek, observes the quantity of the syllables; the Hebrew does not observe the quantity, but only the number and the likeness of the ends of the syllables [i. e., rhyme]. As there is no spondee, trochee or dactyl in Italian poetry, but only the number of the syllables and the observance of the similarity of endings, [so] the Hebrew follows more or less the same pattern. Wherefore when Jerome writes either that Job or that the Psalms run in dactyl and spondee and says in the preface to Job that it glides along in verse; and when Augustine, with others, testifies about the poems of the Hebrews, you should know that it is not precisely the same feet and the same poetry that is indicated by them, but something similar. Consequently, neither "heroicum carmen" [the classical hexameter] exists among the Hebrews, nor the [classical] iambic and other kinds, but something like them and such as the foreigners [non-Grecian and non-Roman] sing in various rites. The Psalms, Job, the books of Solomon and the Prophets have obviously a kind of poetry, but it is not of the Latin and the Greek kind. It has a certain numerosity, and it differs a little from prose by the kind of words and poetic figures. . . .*³⁸

English quantitative versification and having found native English versification as "sweet and majestic" as classical measures, yet degraded by its current trivial amorous use, Sidney wished to exemplify by a creative imitation of Hebrew poetry—the "greatest in antiquitie and excellencie"—the proper moral use of native English versification, its aesthetic qualities, and its special propriety, as the English equivalent of the Hebrew form, for translating Hebrew poetry. The accurate dating of these Psalms may help date Sidney's conversion to a respect for English versification.

³⁸ Augustinus Steuchus in Gomarus, *op. cit.*, p. DCXV: Quibus praeire videtur vir doctissimus Augustinus Steuchus episcopus Eugubinus [Rabbi Mosche ben Chabib in Libro נקם דרכי נקם seu prosodiae secutus] quum sua praefatione in Psalmo

This is an unqualified rejection of the classical tradition. Moreover, it seems to distinguish the "numbers" of Hebrew from the "metre" of the Greeks and Romans. Hebrew poetry does not observe the quantity (*Hebraicum nulla tempora*) but only the *number* of the syllables (*sed numerum duntaxat . . . syllabarum*); and it rhymes. It has a certain rhythm, or "numerosity," (*numerosum quiddam*). This and the whole context suggest that "number" (*numerus*) is distinguished from "quantity" (*tempora*) in that it does not observe the internal time of the feet; it merely observes the same number of syllables as does the classical dactyl or spondee or trochee or the classical hexameter line. This distinction, as we shall see in a moment, is amplified and clarified by Scaliger and by Vossius, both of whom, moreover, clearly, equate "numerus" with "rythmus." Thus, Steuchus, influenced by Ibn Chabib—who was obviously including post-biblical accented, rhymed, Hebrew verse³⁹—identifies biblical Hebrew verse with the accented, rhymed, numbered, venacular verse of the Renaissance. With Tremellius, he represents, in sixteenth century continental scholarship, a new orientation toward biblical verse.

The next century reveals a continuation and an amplification of this point of view. In the first decade of the seventeenth century, less than thirty years after the publication of Steuchus' works in France, a great scholar of the French Renaissance, J. J. Scaliger, scornfully attacked the quantitative tradition,

ait quidem; *Moses omnium vetustissimus carmen Deo cecinit: sed vera carmina, seu metricis legibus devincta, in S. literis extare, minime agnoscit. Sic enim paulo post, mentem suam plenius exponit. Carmen autem Hebraicum non idem est atque Graecorum Latinorumque: ut neque Italicum, sive Etruscum, idem atque Latium. Ac potius cum Italico, quam cum Latino similitudinem habet Hebraicum. Latinum, ad imitationem Graeci, tempora syllabarum observat. Hebraicum nulla tempora; sed numerum duntaxat atque similitudinem cadentium syllabarum. Ut non est in Italico carmine spondeus, trocheus, dactylus, sed numeratio tantum syllabarum, & observatio ut similiter desinant: simile quiddam sequitur Hebraicum. Quare quum Hieronymus scribit, aut Job aut Psalmos, dactylo spondeoque decurrere: & quum in praefatione de Job dicit: versu labitur. quaeque Augustinus cum caeteris, de carminibus Hebraeorum testantur, noveris non ipsos praecise pedes nostrumque carmen ab eis, sed simile quiddam designari. Itaque neque Heroicum carmen apud Hebraeos extat, neque iambicum aliaque genera, sed simile quiddam, & quale barbari diversis ritibus canunt. Psalmi, Job, libri Salomonis & Prophetarum, rationem carminis prae se ferunt, sed neque Latini, neque Graeci. Numerosum quiddam, & ab oratione soluta parumper recedens sermonis genere figurisque poeticis. . . .* The square brackets about Rabbi ben Chabib belong to Gomarus' text.

³⁹ Cf. text to note 8.

and on the authority of Augustine and Bede, illuminated the differentia between "rhythmical," or "numbered," verse and "metrical," or quantitative, verse—with special application to Scripture. Scaliger's scholarly authority undoubtedly helped arrest the development of the anti-classical point of view and stimulated the growth of the accentual interpretation. Though he does not use the word "accent," Vossius, who virtually echoes him and actually cites his treatise, does use this word; obviously, with quantity absent, the numbered syllables inevitably follow some principle of stress. Denying, as Jerome had affirmed, that the prophets, the *Psalms*, and *Lamentations* were composed in verse, Scaliger finds that verse exists only in the latter Song of Moses, the *Proverbs*, and most of *Job*. They are not, however, "metrical," but "rhythmical"; like the "Politici" of the later Greeks, which are "rhythmical"—that is, based upon the number of the syllables and not upon their quantity—*Job* and *Proverbs* and, by clear inference, the *Song of Deuteronomy*, with occasional deviations from the norm, are the equivalent of two iambic dimeters. Clarification of "Politici," as applied to these poems, will be reserved for a consideration of the criticism of Vossius, who follows Scaliger very closely.

In 1606, quoting from and commenting upon Jerome's "Denique quid Psalterio canorius, quod in morem nostri Flacci, et Graeci Pindari, nunc iambo currit, nunc Alcaico personat, nunc Sapphico tumet?,"⁴⁰ Scaliger excoriates Jerome and the Hieronymic tradition thus:

Perhaps those who have never read Pindar or do not know what Iambic, Alcaic, or Sapphic metre is, will think that the poetry of Pindar runs in Iambic and Alcaic or in Sapphic metre. You may read the same in the Preface to *Job* [of Jerome] also.⁴¹ Concerning the Psalter, I wonder more [about the imputation of classical quantity] because neither in this nor in *Lamentations* is there any poem [at all] confined by laws of metre, but it is merely prose, animated by a poetic spirit. Furthermore, the prose of Isaiah and of other prophets, virtually poetry, is sometimes figurative; you could not

⁴⁰ Cf. Jerome, "Praefatio in Librum II Chronicorum Eusebi," *Patr. Lat., op. cit.*, 22.442. 3. Jerome also included Moses' song (probably the latter one) in *Deuteronomy*, a song in *Isaiah*, and *Job*.

⁴¹ Cf. Jerome, "In Librum Job (Praefatio)," *Patr. Lat., op. cit.*, 20.1082. This passage includes Scaliger's succeeding references to the verse of the *Psalms* and *Lamentations*.

rightly, however, on that account, call it poetry. Only the Song of Moses at the end of *Deuteronomy*, the Proverbs of Solomon, and almost the whole book of *Job* are held together by a certain bond of *rhythm* which is the equivalent of two iambic dimeters and falls upon the ears with a ring. Sometimes, however, they are of fewer, sometimes of more syllables, like the catalectic, the brachycatalectic, and the hypermetric verses, and so forth, of the Greeks: *not by any means that compensation is made in accordance with the principle of quantitative equivalence, as is usual in Greek verse, for this cannot be expressed in the Hebrew tongue*; but depending upon the requirements of the thought, the *rhythm* is now longer, now shorter. For as the very learned Bede gathered from the writings of Augustine and others, *rhythm* is a "patterned grouping of words, very similar to metre, accommodated to the judgment of the ear, *not on metrical principle*, but through the *number* of the syllables, as are," says he, "the songs of the vernacular poets. And to be sure, *rhythm can exist without metre*, but metre cannot exist without rhythm." Again Bede to the same effect, following the same Augustine, unless I am mistaken. "Metre is the principle [of quantity] within a pattern. Rhythm is the pattern without the principle [of quantity]. Usually, however, by chance, so to speak, you will find in rhythm the principle [of quantity] also, not observed by the application of an artistic device, but as a result of the sound and the pattern itself; this [effect] the vernacular poets necessarily achieve in a rustic [that is, natural, or untutored], the learned poets, in a learned way, etc." These are the words of that man who explained what rhythm is better than any of the ancients. But see further in Augustine, Book III, on Music. And so the "political verses" of the Greeks, which are *based on the number of syllables*, not the *principle of quantity*, are nothing else but *rhythm*. In this way, the Book of Job, the Proverbs of Solomon are merely rhythm, not a metrical pattern; and in these, and that is true usually, the verses are two iambic dimeters, sometimes three dipodies, and sometimes there is a strange unevenness so that they follow the laws not even of rhythm. For . . . no one can make it possible to conceive of any kind of *metre* in the Hebrew, Syriac, Arabic, and Abyssinian tongues, because the nature of the language does not permit it.⁴²

⁴² J. J. Scaliger, "In Prologum Hieronymi," *Animadversiones in Chronologica Eusebii, in Thesaurus Temporum* . . . Lugduni Batavorum, 1606, pp. 6-7. (Italics in the translation are mine). Pindari poesim Iambico & Alcaico metro, aut Sapphico currere credent fortasse, qui nunquam Pindarum legerunt, aut nesciunt quid sit Iambicum, Alcaicum, Sapphicum metrum. Idem leges & in Praefatione in Iob. De Psalterio magis miror, quum neque in eo, neque in Threnis, ullum canticum sit metricis legibus adstrictum, sed mere soluta oratio sit, caractere poetico animata. Quum Isaiae & aliorum prophetarum oratio instar poeseos aliquando figurata est, quam tamen propterea poesim esse non recte dixeris. Solum canticum Mosis extremo Deuteronomio, Prouerbia Solomonis, & totus fere liber Iob quadam *rythmi* necessi-

The dichotomy between the rhythm of the Hebrews and the metre of the classical writers is absolute; but Scaliger is somewhat unjust to Jerome, whose "In Librum Job (Praefatio)," so caustically referred to, strongly modified (as we have observed) the quantitative principle, as applied to *Job*, by the assertion that its quantitative pattern is very loose,⁴³ and, that, occasionally, it ignores quantity altogether in favor of "numbers, or "rhythm,"⁴⁴ in the sense of Scaliger's own distinction in the Augustinian-Bedic tradition. Moreover, Jerome had not included all of *Isaiah* as metrical, but merely a song of Isaiah, in a passage which Scaliger does not bother to quote: "Quid Deuteronomii et Isaiae cantico pulchrius?"⁴⁵ Possibly, too, Scaliger's discovery of two rhythmical iambic dimeters in the "Song of Deuteronomy" and *Proverbs* and part of *Job*, was influenced by Jerome's ascription of metrical iambic tetrameters to the same poems.⁴⁶ But Scaliger does break completely with Jerome and with Tremellius that *Psalms* and *Lamentations* are

tate cohibentur, qui *rythmus* est instar duarum dimetriarum Iambicarum, & tinnulus accedit ad aures Sed aliquando pauciorum sunt syllabarum, aliquando plurium; quales Graecorum *στίχοι καταληκτικοί, βραχυκαταληκτικοί, ὑπερμετροί*, etc: non utique quod compensatio fiat *κατὰ ἰσοχροσίαν* ut in Graecis solet: neque enim hoc exprimi potest idiomate Hebraico: sed quantum sententia postulat, rythmi nunc longior, nunc brevior est. Est enim *rythmus*, ut doctissimus Beda ex Augustini, & aliorum scriptis collegit, *metris consimilis verborum modulata compositio, non metrica ratione, sed numero syllabarum ad iudicium aurium examinata, ut sunt, inquit, carmina vulgarium poetarum. Et quidem rythmus sine metro esse potest, metrum vero sine rythmo esse non potest.* Rursus idem Beda ex eod. Augustino ni fallor. *Metrum est ratio cum modulatione. Rythmus modulatio sine ratione. Plerumque tamen casu quodam inuenies etiam rationem in rythmo non artificii moderatione seruata, sed sono & ipsa modulatione ducente, quem vulgares Poetae necesse est faciant rustice, docti faciant docte etc.* Haec ille, quo nemo veterum melius quid sit *Rythmus*, explicauit. Sed amplius vide apud Augustinum lib III de Musica. Itaque politici Graecorum, qui syllabarum numero, non temporum ratione constant, nihil aliud quam *rythmus* sunt. Sic liber Iob, Prouerbia Solomonis mere *rythmus* est, non *metrica modulatio*; in quibus et plurimum versus sunt duae dimetriae Iambicae, aliquando tres dipodiae, aliquando mira est inequalitas ut ne quidem rythmi legem sequantur. Nam ut in Hebraico, Syriaco, Arabico & Abyssinio idiomate ulla metri species concipi possit, nemo efficere possit, quia id natura sermonis non patitur.

⁴³ "In Librum Job (Praefatio)," *Patr. Lat., op. cit.*, 20.1082: Hexametri versus sunt, dactylo spondeoque currentes, et propter linguae idioma crebro recipientes et alios pedes non earundem syllabarum, sed eorundem temporum. Cf. note 19.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, cf. note 20 and text; cf. text to note 21.

⁴⁵ Jerome, "In Librum Job (Praefatio)," *op. cit.*, 23.1082.

⁴⁶ Jerome, "Epistola ad Paulam," *Patr. Lat., op. cit.*, 22.442.3. Cf. "The Hebrew Hexameter," *op. cit.*, pp. 68-9, note 9.

in verse,⁴⁷ as well as with Tremellius that the "Song of Deborah" and unidentified songs of *Isaiah*, *Hezekiah*[?], *Jeremiah*, *Habakkuk* are rhythmical: ⁴⁸ only *Job*, *Proverbs*, and the "Song of Deuteronomy" are composed in verse; they *usually* follow two iambic dimeters, in a pattern that resembles quantitative verse *only in the equivalence in the number of syllables*, not in the principle of quantity; at times they may observe quantity by sheer chance; at times, they do not even adhere to the pattern of numbered syllables. At most, they are "rhythmical," not "metrical."

Scaliger's influence is direct and obvious upon another international scholar of the early seventeenth century—Gerhardt Johann Vossius (1577-1649). The Dutch scholar rejects *Psalms* and *Lamentations* in phrasing almost identical with Scaliger's:

In the *Psalms* and *Lamentations*, not even rhythm is observed; the style is, on the contrary, prose which is animated by a poetic spirit and character.⁴⁹

His distinction between rhythm and metre and his examples of rhythmical poetry are identical with Scaliger's—*Job*, *Proverbs*, and the "Song of Deuteronomy":

... in *Job* and the *Proverbs* of Solomon there is only rhythm, but not metre: that is, the number of the syllables, not the quantity, is observed. The same applies to the latter song of Moses.⁵⁰

He attacks the very passage which Scaliger had scored in "Praefatio in Librum II Chronicorum Eusebii," and, like

⁴⁷ Cf. note 24. Tremellius' third, or poetic division, of the Old Testament,—the "rhythmical" or "numbered," division—includes *Job*, *Psalms*, *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes*, and *Song of Songs Testamenti Veteris* . . . *op. cit.*, p. A3. *Biblorum Pars Tertia. Id est, Quinque Libri Poetici. Libri III tomi Iob, Psalmi, Proverbia, Ecclesiastes, Liber Canticorum.*

⁴⁸ Cf. note 22. "Jechizkijae" may be a poor transliteration of "Ezekiel."

⁴⁹ Vossius, G. J., "De Artis Poeticae Natura, ac Constitutione Liber," XIII, 2, pp. 30-1, in *De Rhetorica, De Poetica, De Artium et Scientiarum Natura ac Constitutione, Opera*, Vol. 3, Amsterdam, 1695-1701, 7 vols: At in psalmis ac threnis, ne rythmus quidem observatur: *sed oratio est soluta, quae spiritu ac charactere poetico animetur*. Cf. Scaliger's "De Psalterio magis miror quum neque in eo, neque in Threnis, ullum canticum sit metricis legibus adstrictum, sed mere *soluta oratio sit, charactere poetico animata*. Italics are mine.

⁵⁰ *Ibid* . . . in Iobo, & proverbis Salomonis, solum rythmus est, non metrum: hoc est, syllabarum numerus, non quantitas, attenditur. Idem iudicium est de posteriore Mosis cantico.

Scaliger, denies that Pindar had used the verses Jerome had ascribed to him in "In Librum Job (Praefatio)":

Jerome indeed says that the Psalter, in the manner of Pindar, runs now in Iambics, now rings with Alcaics, now swells with Sapphics. But he is wrong no less concerning Pindar than concerning the Psalter. For Pindar did not use those metres which Jerome has thought; nor are metres of this kind found.⁵¹

But whereas Scaliger—and Tremellius and Steuchus, as well—had left the principle of accent, as opposed to that of quantity, to the reader's inference, Vossius states explicitly that Hebrew verse is accentual. The very next sentence asserts:

Certainly the Hebrews pay attention to nothing in their verses, except the number and the *accent* of the syllables.⁵²

Unquestionably all this derives from Scaliger. Explaining the false construction placed upon biblical verse, Vossius continues by citing the French scholar:

Occasionally . . . certain verses may seem to approach the metres of the Greeks and Latins. In this way, the latter song of Moses approaches either the hexameter, as Josephus, Origen, and Jerome have thought; or rather the tetrameter, which is the opinion of Joseph Scaliger in the *Animadvers. Euseb. in prologum Hieronymi*.⁵³

But lest he be misinterpreted as associating Scaliger's tetrameter—two iambic dimeters—with the false quantitative theory, Vossius writes not only of the "Song of Deuteronomy," but of *Job* and *Proverbs*, where number, not quantity, was observed:⁵⁴

They seem to be trochaic tetrameter catalectic, if you count the syllables but disregard the quantity.⁵⁵

⁵¹ *Ibid.*: Hieronymus quidem ait, *psalterium in morem Pindari nunc Iambico currere, nunc Alcaico personare, nunc Sapphico tumere*. Sed non minus de Pindaro, quam de psalterio, fallitur. Nec enim Pindarus iis utitur metris, quae Hieronymus putavit: nec ejusmodi metra inveniuntur. Cf. Scaliger notes 40, 41, 42.

⁵² *Ibid.*: Nempe Hebraei in versibus nihil attendunt praeter syllabarum numerum & *accentum*. Italics are mine.

⁵³ *Ibid.*: . . . interdum quaedam accedere ad Graecorum, Latinorumque metra videntur. Quomodo canticum Mosis posterius vel ad hexametrum accedit, ut Josephus, Origenes, & Hieronymus, putarunt: vel potius tetrametrum, quae Josephi Scaligeri sententia est *Animadvers. Euseb. in prologum Hieronymi*.

⁵⁴ Cf. note 50.

⁵⁵ Vossius, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-1: Hi trochaici tetrametri catalecti videntur, si syllabas numeres, sed quantitas negligitur.

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And like Scaliger, he compares them with the "Politici":

And they are therefore like those verses of the Greeks which they call "Politici."⁵⁶

Despite the similarities and the admitted critical debt, there appears to be a minor difference in the scansion of *Job*, *Proverbs*, and the "Song of Deuteronomy": Scaliger speaks of a normal line the "equivalent of two iambic dimeters"; Vossius, of a line that "seems to be trochaic tetrameter catalectic." Patently, both are thinking, not of the modern monopodic iambic or trochaic foot, but of the ancient dipodic one: ~ - ~ - and - ~ - ~, respectively. This implication becomes certain from Scaliger's admission that there are "sometimes three dipodies" in *Proverbs* and *Job* and from Vossius' assertion that the "Song of Deuteronomy" "approaches *either the hexameter, . . . or, rather, the tetrameter.*" The ancient hexameter line varied from twelve to seventeen syllables; the ancient trochaic tetrameter catalectic, in dipodies, had fifteen syllables; the modern monopodic trochaic tetrameter catalectic has only seven syllables. Obviously, Vossius could not have seen sufficient similarity between the hexameter of twelve to seventeen syllables and the tetrameter catalectic of seven syllables to justify a comparison. The inference of *dipodic* tetrameters is supported by a typical line from the "Song of Deuteronomy," which, transliterated, shows the applicability of the dipodic fifteen-syllabled line and the insufficiency of the monopodic seven-syllabled one:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15
Ya-'a-rof kam-ma-ṭar lik-hi Tiz-al kaṭ-ṭal 'im-ra-ti.⁵⁷

Vossius' line, then, has fifteen syllables; Scaliger's sixteen. Vossius' line, as we shall see, is the norm of the "Politici"; Scaliger's seems one foot too long. Yet the exposition of "Politici" in Du Cange strongly implies that Scaliger's qualification—"qui rythmus est *instar* duarum dimetriarum Iambicarum"—suggests, very loosely, the norm of the "Politici," or fifteen syllables. The divergence between Vossius' "trochaic"

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Similes igitur sunt versus, ac Graecorum illi, quos politicos vocant. Cf. Scaliger, note 42.

⁵⁷ *Deut.* 32: 2, a line which Wither uses to illustrate the accentual principle of biblical verse; cf. text to note 59.

and Scaliger's "iambic" is less significant than it appears. Essentially, they agree. Vossius, less critical than his predecessor, tries to *identify* the biblical verses with the "Politici"; Scaliger merely designates a very close resemblance.

Scaliger, it must be recalled, had told us that "Politici" were based on the "number" of syllables, not on their "quantity." Admitting the difficulty of determining the origin of the term "Politici versus," and explaining that their rhythm, like that of the dithyramb, is not rigid, Du Cange informs us that they are:

. . . that kind of verse in which very many of the books of the later Greeks [were] composed. . . . They consist of a fixed number of syllables which scarcely exceeds fifteen, and frequent metaphors . . . as Martin Crusius observes in the *Turcograecia*, p. 193: *They consist of fifteen syllables, each in two iambic dimeter verses, the first Catalectic, the second Catalectic Anacreontic; they are reckoned by accent . . . rather than by quantity of syllables. . . . But on this kind of verse one should listen especially to Leo Allatius in the Diatriba de Simeonum scriptis: Versus politici, he says, usually consist of iambs and Anacreontics, but in such a way that the measure is not the quantity of the syllables which the ancients observed very accurately, but their number; and that the variations of accent are observed. . . . The same rule is followed in "politici," where they [the verses] never exceed fifteen syllables; and if any seem to go beyond that number, they shorten or diminish them by aphaeresis or synaloepha, as is observed especially in the current and vernacular speech of the Greeks, as in that of the Italians, too, among whom such hiatuses are restricted to the retention of the number of syllables. They are called "politici" because they are common to all and adapted to every person's use. . . . They are simple Trochees; for as these [trochees] consist of seven feet and a syllable, so do "Politici," except that such verses of the ancients sometimes exceed fifteen syllables by reason of longer feet; this never happens in "Politici," as has been said of Iambi. And as the lines of the ancients are constituted of two divisions and broken in the middle, so are these also which are called "Politici."* Thus far, this learned man.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Du Cange, Charles Du Fresne, *Glossarium Mediae et Infimae Latinitatis* . . . cum supplementis integris D. P. Carpenterii, Adelungii, aliorum, suisque digessit G. A. L. Henschel . . . , Paris, 1937-8, 10 vols., 6. 395-6: . . . quo carminis genere conscripti complures . . . recentiorum Graecorum libri. . . . Syllabarum enim certo numero, qui vix ultra 15, excurrit, crebrisque metaphoris . . . constant . . . ut observat Martinus Crusius *Turcograecia*, pag. 193, *quindenis syllabis constant, ex 2. iambicis dimetris versiculis, priore Catalecto, posteriore Catalectico Anacreontico; in quibus potius tonorum . . . quam quantitas syllabarum ratio habetur. . . . Sed de hoc versuum genere audiendus in primis Leo Allatius in Diatriba de Simeonum scriptis: "Versus,"*

This exposition clarifies and perhaps resolves the minor divergencies of Scaliger and Vossius about the reading of the normal verse lines of *Job*, *Proverbs*, and the "Song of Deuteronomy." It should be remembered that "Politici" do not have a regular internal pattern: Allatius notes that variations of accent are observed (*declinationesque accentuum attendantur*). Moreover, Scaliger does *not* mention that the biblical verses never exceed fifteen syllables, the maximum number for "Politici"; sometimes he found three dipodies and sometimes lines of more or fewer syllables than rightly belong to two iambic dimeters; *usually* the verses are two iambic dimeters (*plurimum versus sunt duae dimetriae Iambicae*). Therefore, where Scaliger speaks of the "equivalent of two iambic dimeters" (*instar duarum dimetriorum Iambicarum*) he does not mean two pure iambic dimeters: Crusius tells us that the first member of the two dimeters is catalectic. Allatius implies that one of the dimeters is full ("Versus Politici usually consist of Iambics and Anacreontics," or trochees). Thus, one pure dimeter and one catalectic dimeter equal the fifteen syllables of the "Politici." This is the kind of combination that would make biblical verses seem like "Politici" to Scaliger.

As for Vossius' claim that the biblical poems are trochaic tetrameter catalectic, he is partly supported by Crusius, who calls the second member of the two dimeters "catalectic Anacreontic," that is, trochaic catalectic; it is fully supported by Allatius, who, even while describing "Politici" as composed of both "iambics and Anacreontics," or trochees, goes so far as to designate them as "simple Trochees" (*meri Trochaici*).

Seemingly, then, "Politici" were interpreted either as iambic

inquit, Politici ut plurimum Iambicis et Anacreonticis constant: ita tamen ut nulla quantitatis syllabarum, quod accuratissime veteres observabant, ratio habeatur, tantum earum numerus, declinationesque accentuum attendantur. . . . Quod idem servatum est in "Politiciis" in quibus syllabas quindecim nunquam excedunt; et si quae ultra videntur, eas per aphaeresin, sive synalephen decurtant et absumunt; quod magis in Graecorum recenti vulgatoque sermone, ut et in Italorum, apud quos similes hiatus ad numerum syllabarum retinendum restringuntur, conspicitur. Politici ideo dicti, quod communes omnium sunt, usuque eorum accommodati. . . . Meri Trochaici sunt: quemadmodum enim illi septem pedibus et syllaba constant, ita et hi: nisi quod antiquorum similes versus ratione pedum longiorum quindecim syllabas aliquando excedunt, "Politici" nunquam, ut de Iambicis dictum est. Et quemadmodum antiquorum duobus membris integuntur, mediique inciduntur, ita et hi qui nuncupantur Politici. Hactenus vir doctissimus.

or trochaic, or as iambic and trochaic. Scaliger scanned the biblical poems, loosely, as iambic "Politici"; Vossius, strictly, as trochaic "Politici." Vossius identified them with the normal fifteen-syllabled line of the "Politici"; Scaliger, with a line approaching it. They concur, however, in the significant conviction that the poems are composed of non-quantitative, accented, dipodic tetrameters. This is a definitive, if bold, advance upon the broad accentual implications of Tremellius and even upon the clear, yet general affirmations of Steuchus, in the sixteenth century; for two Christian scholars of international eminence had proclaimed, not only (1) that biblical poetry was accentual, even though the syllabic count resembled that of the quantitative system; (2) but that it was generally tetrameter, dipodically, following a norm of fifteen syllables; (3) that it had many deviations, suggesting a vague apprehension of the "free" Hebrew accentual verse; (4) and that it broke into two divisions (Scaliger's "two iambic dimeters," and Vossius' "trochaici tetrametri catalecti," virtually echoing Allatius' "Trochees . . . of seven feet and a syllable" "in two divisions and broken in the middle"), suggesting a dim awareness of the principle of parallelism, which Bishop Lowth, in the eighteenth century, explained to the Western world as a basic principle of Hebrew prosody. This interpretation, though utterly incorrect in the details of scansion, is correct in principle of accent as opposed to quantity and looks, as in a glass darkly, toward the fundamental truth of *parallelismus membrorum* and to the generally accepted theory of a free accentual rhythm which considers only the syllables receiving the main accent and disregards the intervening ones. It frees itself of the shackles of the long patristic tradition and turns its face toward the light.

3

In seventeenth century England, as well as on the continent, the accentual orientation is reflected in the criticism of George Wither, thirteen years after the publication of Scaliger's treatise; by 1619, the problem of Hebrew prosody was so significant to this lyrist, pastoralist, and satirist, that he devoted a chapter to its consideration in his *A Preparation to the Psalter*. He has much in common with Scaliger and Vossius, but in many

ways he goes beyond them in insight, scholarly approach, and, it must be confessed, in creation of some things unknown which his Renaissance imagination bodied forth in the pursuit of truth. Throughout, however, he utterly disavows the quantitative tradition and espouses the cause of the "accentualists." The detailed examination of Wither must await a future study; a few excerpts suggesting the trend of his views must suffice, for the present:

. . . I doubt not that I may ghesse as neer the manner of their Verse, as those who haue fought for it by the Greeke or Latine rules. And I think it not unlikely, that the auncient Iewes had both such kinde of Verses, as some of ours are, and the same freedome in their Composures that we use; Yea, that they varied their Staffe at their pleasure, making it now longer, now shorter, as they listed, or best fitted the matter.

. . . They confesse, and our owne experience informeth us, that their Poems consist of diuers Numbers intermixt, sometimes equally, sometimes unequally, and oftentimes with Rymes in the periods of Sentences; not much unlike some of our English Numbers, which admitte not very naturally of such kindes of Verse as are usuall with the Latines; especially their dauncing Measures which are composed of Dactyls . . . there appeares sometimes to be a want, and sometime an Ouerplus, in the Syllables of their Verses . . . yet . . . there may bee somewhat to be obserued in the pronuntiation, will will both make the number of syllables equall, and the Ryme full . . . but this that followes, being a part of that excellent Song composed by the Prophet Moses, is to my understanding, in euery thing agreeable to that kind of Verse much in use at this day in our English Tongue. . . .

Iagharoph cammatar Likhi
Tezal cattal imrathi;
Ciseghhirim gnale-dheshe,
Vechirbibim gnale-gnesheb.⁵⁹

which I haue translated into the same fashion of Verse.

Still, as deaw, my doctrine shall;
And, like raine, my speeches fall:
As small drops, upon the flowers;
Or, on grasse, the greater showres.⁶⁰

This "same fashion of Verse," obviously, is the numbered,

⁵⁹ *Deut* 32: 2. See note 57. Each two lines of the translation represent one line of the Hebrew; the whole passage represents two Hebrew lines.

⁶⁰ Wither, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-61.

accentual tetrameter—the same form ascribed to the same poem by Scaliger and Vossius; and the verse of these particular lines also falls into the category of the “Politici” of Scaliger and Vossius—an accentual line norm of about fifteen syllables, the first unit divided into eight and seven syllables, respectively, to each half-line, and the second unit divided into eight and eight, in the same pattern. The English translation shows, too, that the English poet viewed these Hebrew tetrameter lines, as Scaliger had viewed the whole poem, as divided into halves of approximately the same number of syllables—into two dimeters—but that, unlike his continental predecessor, and yet like Vossius, he scanned them as trochaic, not iambic. And, finally, if we cast a backward glance to the continent and to England, we observe that, like the sixteenth century Italian Steuchus and the Elizabethan author of “The Arte of English Poesie,” he believed that Hebrew poetry rhymed.

It seems manifest, then, that Renaissance England, too, had entered the new current in the realm of biblical aesthetics; that it, too, was venturing its bark into the uncharted, mysterious sea of Hebrew prosody; that it, too, was questing eastward toward the vision of the dawn. What it found there through George Wither’s criticism is the province of another investigation.⁶¹

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⁶¹ I am deeply indebted to Professor Konrad Gries, Chairman of the Department of Classical Languages at Queens College, for his kindness in checking the Greek and Latin material and for his scholarly counsel and unfailing aid in solving difficulties of translation and interpretation.

W. B. YEATS: A POET'S STAGECRAFT, 1899-1911

By THOMAS PARKINSON

. . . I need a theatre; I
believe myself to be a dramatist;
I desire to show events and not
merely tell them; and two of my
best friends were won for me by
my plays . . .

W. B. Y., *Plays and
Controversies*

1

From 1899 to 1911 Yeats became deeply absorbed in the affairs of the Irish National Theatre, and his personal experience at the Abbey¹ was so varied and even violent that its effect upon him was crucial and formative. His total devotion of time and effort to reading and producing plays, procuring and placating actors, raising and administering finances, facing angry audiences and dissatisfied patrons, certainly had an effect on his outlook and on his practice of his craft.² Of all the activities and relationships which probably had an important effect on the development of Yeats' sense of life and art, however, I should like to abstract and consider one: the fact that he wrote a play a year from 1899 to 1911 and revised each one assiduously after production. In moving from one poetic mode to another, from lyrics written mainly for the study to plays written primarily for the stage, Yeats was forced to cast away much that he had learned as a lyrist and bring into his art much that he had formerly rejected or not even considered.

¹ The Irish dramatic movement with which Yeats was associated did not become the Irish National Theatre Society until March 1903 and did not enter the Abbey Theatre until late in 1904. However, since the terms Irish Theatre and Abbey Theatre have become so tightly associated as to be interchangeable, I have used them in that manner. Moreover, Yeats' responsibilities with the Abbey were most exacting, and it was there that he displayed his talents as organizer and administrator to the best advantage.

² A note of a typical day in Dublin runs as follows: 'Breakfast 10.45; 11-1 10 reading script for the theatre and letters; 2 30-3 40 at the Abbey; 4-7 letters; evening Abbey.' Joseph Hone, *W. B. Yeats, 1865-1939* (New York, 1943), p. 241.

As he explored the new art he found that it asked new treatment of subject matter, that new treatment demanded a modulation of attitude as well as of linguistic technique. In his preface to *Poems 1899-1905* he explained his devotion to dramatic poetry in terms which express his own sense of the use of drama in his development:

Some of my friends . . . do not understand why I have not been content with lyric writing. But one can only do what one wants to do, and to me drama—and I think it has been the same with other writers—has been the search for more of manful energy, more of cheerful acceptance of whatever rises out of the logic of events, and for clean outline, instead of those outlines of lyric poetry that are blurred with desire and vague regret.³

Clean outline of the objective world, manful energy in his *personae*, a sense of the logic of events, a cheerful acceptance of experience and action: these are not qualities which one associates with Yeats' early poems; and these qualities—so evident in the later verse—came into Yeats' poetry with his theatre experience.

In the theatre Yeats willingly underwent a discipline which changed his mode of rendering experience in almost every phase and in so doing sharpened and amplified his sense of life. Fresh qualities were infused in the poetry, and qualities before only potential were now actualized. Potentially Yeats had always been a poet of conflict; for while he had no really systematic view of life, he habitually saw the world as a scheme of continually opposing values. In his expository writings whenever he wrote the name of a concept its antithesis accompanied it immediately. Thus "reason" evoked "imagination," "descriptive landscape" called forth "vision," and so the contrasting pairs issued in neat order: abstraction-personality, observation-experience, allegory-symbolism, memory-inspiration, Nature-Art, criticism-revelation, knowledge-mystery, action-trance, idea-mood. This habit of thought was exhibited in his early poetry which had for its main matter the opposition of two worlds or schemes of value, the natural and supernatural, praising always the remote and vague, yearning for a life of dream, casual revery, and innocent inconsequential delight:

³ *Poems 1899-1905*, p. xii.

Caolte tossing his burning hair
 And Niamh calling *Away, come away:*
Empty your heart of its mortal dream.

Against the mortal world of reason, abstraction, observation, criticism, knowledge, action, and idea, Yeats affirmed the world of imagination, personality, unmotivated experience, revelation, trance, and mood. The texture of the early poetry is composed of language which does just that. It is mood, not idea, that forms the unifying principle of *Poems* in its various versions and of *The Wind Among the Reeds*. The wide suggestiveness of his symbols, the lulling rise and fall of the metrics, the recurrent theme and pattern of flight and longing—these deny by their very sensuous impact the value of objective observation, abstraction, and analysis. But at no point in the poems do the two worlds come into conflict which could strike dramatic sparks.

By its very nature dramatic poetry demands conflict, and through the demands of the theatre Yeats was forced to objectify the conflict which implicitly underlay the early poems. The true subject matter of Yeats' poetry was the duel between two sets of value, two ways of living; and it is illuminating that the major addition to *The Countess Cathleen* after the 1899 performance should have exploited the conflict between the world of imagination and the world of action.⁴ Most simply stated, the major subject of Yeats' Abbey dramas was the conflict between the fixed palpable world of human affairs (Guaire, Conchubar) and the world of passion and aspiration which is beyond reason, system, or office (Seanchan, Cuchulain). The basic split in the plays is that between the institutional world, limited, tame, calculating, interested in the virtue of fixed character, and the personal world, exuberant, care-free, wild, affirming the values of intense personality.

As Yeats came to perceive more clearly both his subject matter and the demands of treatment made upon it by the Irish Theatre, as his dramatic practice revealed what his early lyric technique had not allowed him to explore, he developed a

⁴ "After the performance in 1899 I added the love scene between Aleel and the Countess . . ." A note in the 1912 edition of the play, Volume I of *Dublin Plays* (London, 1912), p. 113. The scene appears in *Collected Plays* (New York, 1934), pp. 25 ff.

theory of drama which expressed clearly his abiding convictions and guided him in the creation and revision of his plays. Basic to this theory was his notion of human character and personality.

In Yeats' view, the human mind was capable of two orders of experience, one peculiar to the individual, the other common to the race. In day to day urban life people lived the individual life of character; exalted out of ordinary circumstances, they lived the common life of passion. Character was the continually visible aspect, the distinctive attributes which mark off man from man: religion, nationality, class, profession, ways of walking, talking, and dressing. A "character" was to Yeats a humor figure, set apart from his fellow men by some extravagance of dress or speech.

Comedy treats "character" and originates in the peculiarities of human beings, their differentiation from one another:

. . . tragedy must always be a drowning and breaking of the dykes that separate man from man, and . . . it is upon these dykes comedy keeps house.⁵

Since comedy is based on the separateness of individuals, it establishes a community with its audience by appeal to the circumstances of their daily experience; the ideal response to a comic figure would be to place him in the world of usual being and praise his inventor for having made a figure that one would know if one met him on the street. Hence it is the essence of comedy to individuate by scrutiny of surface characteristics.

Yet the peculiarities of dress, gesture, and speech do not exhaust the interest of a human being. There remains some hidden resource which comedy does not touch nor character include:

. . . behind the momentary self, which acts and judges in the world, and is subject to the judgment of the world, there is that which cannot be called before any mortal judgment seat. . . .⁶

This is the common life of passion, which originates in that soul which is alike in all men. This soul, the *anima mundi*, is

⁵ *Essays* (New York, 1924), p. 298.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

the great source of inspired experience, and the passion which is its essence is also the essence of tragic action:

Tragedy is passion alone, and rejecting character, it gets form from motives, from the wandering of passion. . . .⁷

Tragedy and comedy are alike only in that they are concerned with a moment of intense life. The dramatist abstracts an action from the welter of experience, purifies it, reduces it to as simple a form as is compatible with the demands of the theatre. In tragic art the passion, after being purified from all but itself, is ". . . aroused into a perfect intensity by opposition with some other passion, or it may be with the law. . . ."⁸ Yeats' conception of tragedy does not admit the concept of waste or loss, for his sympathies are always with the passionate beings, not with the fixed and, he would say, impermanent structures of the state or church. Thus Coriolanus' pride is "noble" and Cleopatra's sensuality is proof that she had a soul which was "all flame":

If we were not certain of the law we would not feel the struggle, the drama, but the subject of art is not law, which is a kind of death, but the praise of life, and it has no commandments that are not positive.⁹

To Yeats tragic flaws are virtues.

Tragedy, then, is that art which affirms the value of passionate experience as manifested in the intense moment when character is shed and the hero transcends the limits of his merely individual mind and becomes the vehicle of an eternal state of the *anima mundi*. Tragedy utilizes the interplay of circumstance and character mainly as a means to an end, for it is concerned with matters vaster than any individual person, time, or place. Tragic figures go beyond the divisions established by the social world and in their moments of passion attain unity of being by overcoming the obstacles presented to them by the temporal world; they are

. . . those men and women . . . who have made their death a ritual of passion; for what is passion but the straining of man's being against some obstacle that obstructs its unity?¹⁰

⁷ *Autobiography* (New York, 1938), p. 402.

⁸ *Plays and Controversies* (New York, 1924), p. 105.

⁹ *Loc. cit.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

Thus in his definition of tragedy and comedy Yeats expressed his sense of the two orders of experience, the two aspects of the human mind (*anima hominis, anima mundi*), and provided a basis for his own treatment of those two orders. Yeats himself wrote both prose comedies and poetic tragedies for the Abbey audience, realizing that the appeal of a dramatist was based on more than one type of attainment:

The play that is to give them a quite natural pleasure should tell them either of their own life, or of that life of poetry where every man can see his own image, because there alone does human nature escape from arbitrary conditions.¹¹

He also mingled the two types, for while he made distinctions between tragedy and comedy for the purposes of discourse, his practice did not follow the lines of pure definition:

We may not find either mood in its purity, but in mainly tragic art one distinguishes devices to exclude or lessen character, to diminish the power of that daily mood, to cheat or blind its too clear perception. If the real world is not altogether rejected, it is but touched here and there, and into the places we have left empty we summon rhythm, balance, pattern, images that remind us of vast passions. . . .¹²

Most dramatic art (including all of Shakespeare), according to Yeats, would be tragi-comedy. His own tragic plays derive form from the clash of motive and character, and retain a hold upon the real world by their mingling of prose and poetry, by the often conversational tone of the verse, the colloquial flavor of the diction.

In composing poetic drama for the Abbey, Yeats was primarily interested in the passionate moment which expressed the common life of man as manifest in one intense personality. The plays attained dramatic tension by dramatizing the struggle between two ways of life and thought, the one desiring order, stability, structure, the other standing for war, love, poetry, mystic revelation. His hero—warrior, lover, poet, mystic—would face his antagonist—king, mayor, philosopher, skeptic—in a struggle culminating in the moment when the hero would attain that passion which

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹² *Essays*, p. 300.

the great source of inspired experience, and the passion which is its essence is also the essence of tragic action:

Tragedy is passion alone, and rejecting character, it gets form from motives, from the wandering of passion. . . .⁷

Tragedy and comedy are alike only in that they are concerned with a moment of intense life. The dramatist abstracts an action from the welter of experience, purifies it, reduces it to as simple a form as is compatible with the demands of the theatre. In tragic art the passion, after being purified from all but itself, is ". . . aroused into a perfect intensity by opposition with some other passion, or it may be with the law. . . ."⁸ Yeats' conception of tragedy does not admit the concept of waste or loss, for his sympathies are always with the passionate beings, not with the fixed and, he would say, impermanent structures of the state or church. Thus Coriolanus' pride is "noble" and Cleopatra's sensuality is proof that she had a soul which was "all flame":

If we were not certain of the law we would not feel the struggle, the drama, but the subject of art is not law, which is a kind of death, but the praise of life, and it has no commandments that are not positive.⁹

To Yeats tragic flaws are virtues.

Tragedy, then, is that art which affirms the value of passionate experience as manifested in the intense moment when character is shed and the hero transcends the limits of his merely individual mind and becomes the vehicle of an eternal state of the *anima mundi*. Tragedy utilizes the interplay of circumstance and character mainly as a means to an end, for it is concerned with matters vaster than any individual person, time, or place. Tragic figures go beyond the divisions established by the social world and in their moments of passion attain unity of being by overcoming the obstacles presented to them by the temporal world; they are

. . . those men and women . . . who have made their death a ritual of passion; for what is passion but the straining of man's being against some obstacle that obstructs its unity?¹⁰

⁷ *Autobiography* (New York, 1938), p. 402.

⁸ *Plays and Controversies* (New York, 1924), p. 105

⁹ *Loc. cit.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

Thus in his definition of tragedy and comedy Yeats expressed his sense of the two orders of experience, the two aspects of the human mind (*anima hominis, anima mundi*), and provided a basis for his own treatment of those two orders. Yeats himself wrote both prose comedies and poetic tragedies for the Abbey audience, realizing that the appeal of a dramatist was based on more than one type of attainment:

The play that is to give them a quite natural pleasure should tell them either of their own life, or of that life of poetry where every man can see his own image, because there alone does human nature escape from arbitrary conditions.¹¹

He also mingled the two types, for while he made distinctions between tragedy and comedy for the purposes of discourse, his practice did not follow the lines of pure definition:

We may not find either mood in its purity, but in mainly tragic art one distinguishes devices to exclude or lessen character, to diminish the power of that daily mood, to cheat or blind its too clear perception. If the real world is not altogether rejected, it is but touched here and there, and into the places we have left empty we summon rhythm, balance, pattern, images that remind us of vast passions. . . .¹²

Most dramatic art (including all of Shakespeare), according to Yeats, would be tragi-comedy. His own tragic plays derive form from the clash of motive and character, and retain a hold upon the real world by their mingling of prose and poetry, by the often conversational tone of the verse, the colloquial flavor of the diction.

In composing poetic drama for the Abbey, Yeats was primarily interested in the passionate moment which expressed the common life of man as manifest in one intense personality. The plays attained dramatic tension by dramatizing the struggle between two ways of life and thought, the one desiring order, stability, structure, the other standing for war, love, poetry, mystic revelation. His hero—warrior, lover, poet, mystic—would face his antagonist—king, mayor, philosopher, skeptic—in a struggle culminating in the moment when the hero would attain that passion which

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹² *Essays*, p. 300.

. . . realizes, substantiates, attains, scorns, governs, and is most mighty when it passes from our sight.¹³

Although the passionate moment was the climax of the play, the great bulk of the action was to concern itself with more prosaic matters: the clash of motive and character, rendered in diction true to the natural movement of the speaking voice.

To achieve these ends it was necessary for Yeats to learn the rudiments of dramatic construction, and it was also urgent that he revise his poetic style radically. His rewriting of play after play during rehearsal and after performance slowly taught him the various methods of giving his actions a meaningful coherence and his speeches the authentic tone of individual human voices. The process of discovery which this entailed may seem to us—who do not have to go through it—the discovery of self-evident elementary truths. For Yeats, who came to the writing of poetic drama with a matured lyric style which was useless to him, which he had to cast away almost entirely, the discovery of his new needs and the creation of a new manner compelled the consideration of questions which must at first have seemed insoluble and which were always elemental in nature and importance.

2

Yeats learned the dramatic deficiencies of his early verse through the direct instruction of experience, that is, through seeing his plays performed on the stage. As early as 1894 he haunted the theatre which produced *The Land of Heart's Desire*:

I came mainly to see how my own play went, and for the first fortnight to vex my most patient actors with new lines. . . .¹⁴

Helped by what he had learned from seeing *The Land of Heart's Desire* on the stage, Yeats also revised *The Countess Cathleen* for *Poems* 1895, and after the 1899 performance of *The Countess* revised the play yet again.¹⁵ By 1906 Yeats was inured to the rewriting of plays after performance:

¹³ *Autobiography*, p. 447.

¹⁴ *Autobiography*, p. 240.

¹⁵ The Huntington Library's unique copy of the 1899 edition of *Poems* contains the autograph revisions made by Yeats when he prepared the 1901 edition for press,

I have written a good many plays in verse and prose, and almost all those plays I have rewritten after performance, sometimes again and again, and every re-writing has been an addition to the masculine element, an increase of strength in the bony structure.¹⁶

Typical of his rewriting is *The Shadowy Waters*, which underwent the following process:

I published in 1902 a version of *The Shadowy Waters*, which, as I had no stage experience whatever, was unsuitable for stage representation, though it had some little success when played during my absence in America in 1904, with very unrealistic scenery before a very small audience of cultivated people. On my return I rewrote the play . . . but found it still too profuse in speech for stage representation. In 1906 I made a stage version, which was played in Dublin in that year.¹⁷

After 1906 Yeats continued tinkering with the play, and while it was not again produced on the Abbey stage, as a poem it has excited both admiration and controversy.¹⁸

The Shadowy Waters was first printed in 1900 (not 1902), after Yeats had worked on it for several years.¹⁹ In a letter to Mr. Weygandt, Yeats said once that he had been "brooding over 'The Shadowy Waters'" since childhood, and when Weygandt asked "which writing of his he cared most for," Yeats answered, "That I was last working on, and then 'The Shadowy Waters.'" The play was evidently of prime importance to Yeats, for when he first met Lady Gregory he not only startled her by saying that about half the characters had eagles' faces but confessed to her that he had put "a great deal of himself into it."²⁰

In its use of occult and Irish symbols and its general theme and movement the play participated in the qualities which

as well as the typescript of the new third act. The poem was revised yet again in 1911, and the history of these revisions, indeed the history of the play's genesis, development and productions is one of the most interesting and revealing processes in Yeats' art from 1889 to 1911.

¹⁶ *Plays and Controversies*, p. 187.

¹⁷ *Collected Poems* (New York, 1933), p. 456.

¹⁸ Hone, *op. cit.*, pp 176-7. A. E. Malone, *The Irish Drama* (London, 1929), p. 141.

¹⁹ Hone, p. 41, p. 112.

²⁰ *Our Irish Theatre* (New York, 1913), p. 3. Mr. Weygandt's notes appear in his *Irish Plays and Playwrights* (Boston and New York, 1913), p. 57.

characterized Yeats' early verse from 1889 to 1901. The main facts of the play remained constant through the various versions, and Yeats' program note for the 1906 production describes the main symbols and the main action of the play with a gracious accuracy:

Once upon a time, when herons built their nests in old men's beards, Forgael, a Sea-King of ancient Ireland, was promised by certain human-headed birds love of a supernatural intensity and happiness. These birds were the souls of the dead, and he followed them over seas toward the sunset where their final rest is. By means of a magic harp, he could call them about him when he would and listen to their speech. His friend Aibric, and the sailors of his ship, thought him mad, or that he and they were being lured to destruction. Presently they captured a ship, and found a beautiful woman upon it, and Forgael subdued her and his own rebellious sailors by the sound of his harp. The sailors fled upon the other ship, and Forgael and the woman drifted on alone following the birds, awaiting death and what comes after, or some mysterious transformation of the flesh, an embodiment of every lover's dream.²¹

To readers of Yeats' early verse the terms of the action are familiar: Forgael yearns for the impossible and gives up temporal life and its rewards for some experience of the unpeopled world beyond the sun. The immortals have pressed upon him, he commands magical power, and he longs for that mingling of the natural and supernatural which was one of Yeats' abiding preoccupations. Once more Yeats' poetic hero, singled out and perhaps victimized by the gods, fares over waters in search of happiness.

If the play is in many respects typical of Yeats' early verse, it also embraces all the elements necessary, in Yeats' definition, to tragic drama. Straining against the obstacle presented by the merely worldly aspirations of his sailors and the "beautiful woman," Forgael might well attain the moment of passionate intensity which would make him stand as a hero worthy of Yeats' affirmation. And the material seems to allow for continual conflict culminating in the final scene.

In the texture of its verse, however, the 1900 version lacked the subsidiary qualities which—Yeats' theatre experience would convince him—were necessary to conflict, to credibility, to

²¹ *The Arrow*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Nov. 24, 1906). No pagination. This publication served as the program for Abbey productions.

audience acceptance. His characters spoke the language of his early poetry; their dialogues drifted into separate monologues, and their addresses to one another deviated into rhapsody and ecstasy. More damaging still was the vocabulary of the verse, the pre-Raphaelite diction infused with occult and Irish symbols esoteric and personal in their bearing:

I began "The Shadowy Waters" when I was a boy, and when I published a version of it six or seven years ago, the plot had been so often re-arranged and was so overgrown with symbolical ideas that the poem was obscure and vague. It found its way upon the stage more or less by accident, for our people had taken it as an exercise in the speaking of verse, and it pleased a few friends, though it must have bewildered and bored the greater portion of the audience.²²

The cause of bewilderment is most evident in the final action of the play. Forgael and Dectora have accepted, without any protracted struggle, their love for one another, and, as Dectora looks out over the waves, she is naively surprised to see a hound and deer scurrying toward the horizon:

. . . O look!
A red-eared hound follows a hornless deer.
There! There! They have gone quickly, for already
The cloudy waters and the glimmering winds
Have covered them. . . .

When Forgael determines the exact point of their disappearance, he returns to the steering-oar and explicates:

The pale hound and the deer wander for ever
Among the winds and waters; and when they pass
The mountain of the gods, the unappeasable gods
Cover their faces with their hair and weep.

This evidently satisfies Dectora, for it surely silences her; but she has a right to be puzzled, as an audience certainly would be. What are these animals doing in the middle of the ocean? And it does not help us particularly to look up at the boat's sail and discover that it is decorated with three rows of hounds, "the first dark, the second red, and the third white with red ears. . . ." The images demand an elucidating context that the lines in which they appear do not provide.

²² *Loc. cit.*

The same images occur in one poem in *The Wind Among the Reeds* and in that book Yeats included a note which supplies the context necessary for understanding the meaning of the imagery in both "Mongan Laments the Change that has Come upon Him and His Beloved" and *The Shadowy Waters*. The lines in the lyric are perhaps even more cryptic than the lines in the play:

Do you not hear me calling, white deer with no horns!
I have been changed to a hound with one red ear!

In the note to this poem Yeats adopts a rather testy tone:

This hound and this deer seem plain images of the desire of man 'which is for the woman,' and 'the desire of the woman which is for the desire of the man,' and of all desires that are as these. I have read them this way in *The Wanderings of Usheen, or Oisín*, and have made my lover sigh because he has seen in their faces 'the immortal desire of immortals.'²³

With this knowledge we could place the images in their context and conclude that the hound and deer symbolize the future fate of Dectora and Forgael, their wandering, the impossibility that any love—human or divine—could ever find satisfaction.

The passage expresses the theme of the play; it comes at a crucial point in the action: and if we are baffled without notes from another volume, the passage would bewilder an auditor entirely. The hound and deer are both obscure and oblique in bearing, and they move through "cloudy waters and glimmering winds"; an interchange of epithets calculated to condense wind and water to a single wavering insubstantial mist. The image has none of the "clean outline" that Yeats was to seek in his practical writing for the theatre but suggests mood through a deliberate confusion of imagery. Throughout the 1900 version this impulse toward moody atmospheric language combines with an equally strong impulse toward symbols personal or esoteric in importance to form a verse of lovely vagueness and dramatic impropriety.

The language of *The Shadowy Waters* is not different in any important respect from that of *The Wind Among the Reeds* or *Poems* 1901. It is saturated with metaphors fetched from *The*

²³ *The Wind Among the Reeds* (New York, 1899), pp. 92-93.

Order of the Golden Dawn and *The Celtic Twilight*, conveying a tone and mood which Yeats, only a few years later, was to object to heartily:

Modern literature, above all poetical literature, is monotonous in its structure and effeminate in its continual insistence upon certain moments of strained lyricism.²⁴

The uniformity of texture in *The Shadowy Waters*, the dreaminess unbroken—whether Forgael, Dectora, or a sailor speaks—by any touch of the colloquial or any individual urge in the characters, is melancholy, monotonous, and lyric in the sense that “The Indian to his Love” is lyric:

William Morris, who did more than any modern to recover mediæval art, did not in his *Earthly Paradise* copy from Chaucer, from whom he copies so much that was *naïve* and beautiful, what seems to me essential in Chaucer’s art. He thought of himself as writing for the reader, who could return to him again and again when the chosen mood had come, and became monotonous, melancholy, too continually lyric in his understanding of emotion and of life.²⁵

A monotonous texture forbids dramatic variety. Without a variety of tone and idiom it is impossible to present various personalities and points of view. Under the critical eye of an average audience, Morris and Yeats would be driven to explore the entire range of their potential sympathies:

Had he accustomed himself to read out his poems upon those Sunday evenings that he gave to Socialist speeches, and to gather an audience of average men, precisely such an audience as I have often seen in his house, he would have been forced to Chaucer’s variety, to his delight in the height and depth, and would have found expression for that humorous, many-sided nature of his.²⁶

If spoken aloud, the verse of *The Shadowy Waters* with its crowded obscure imagery would grow cumulatively perplexing and set any but the most friendly audience in a state of querulous bewilderment:

I owe to him many truths, but I would add to those truths the certainty that all the old writers, the masculine writers of the world, wrote to be spoken or to be sung, and in a later age to be read aloud,

²⁴ *Plays and Controversies*, p. 187.

²⁵ *Loc. cit.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 187-188.

for hearers who had to understand swiftly or not at all, and who gave up nothing of life to listen, but sat, the day's work over, friend by friend, lover by lover.²⁷

If Yeats was to write for "hearers who had to understand swiftly or not at all," he could not continue writing in the mode of his early lyrics. We forgive, on first reading a short lyric, so long as the poetic thread is clear to us through the title or the general idea and movement of the poem; we make a mild act of charity until the scheme of the poem is known, the poem ends, and we can return to the beginning in order to read at yet another level, correcting and elaborating our first incomplete understanding of the lyric. But the players, when their words raise a question, cannot stay for an answer; they must go on and leave us, if the verse remains complex or esoteric, confused and ultimately indifferent or angry. T. S. Eliot thinks that the most important cause of improvement in Yeats' dramatic verse is ". . . the gradual purging out of poetic ornament." Certainly it was necessary, if Yeats was to write successfully for a lively critical audience, to purge his verse of the very qualities which gave his early lyrics a substantial charm:

The course of improvement is towards a greater and greater starkness. The beautiful line for its own sake is a luxury dangerous even for the poet who has made himself a virtuoso of the theater. What is necessary is a beauty which shall not be in the line or the isolable passage, but woven into the dramatic texture itself; so that you can hardly say whether the lines give grandeur to the drama, or whether it is the drama which turns the words into poetry.²⁸

Because Yeats was still striving for the effect of his early lyrics, the 1900 version of *The Shadowy Waters* lacked the sharp conflict so essential to dramatic force. The very tone and texture of the poetry do not admit the importance of anything but Forgael's aspirations and shun the claim of any other point of view, Aibric's, Dectora's or the sailors', so that when Forgael's antagonists speak they are seriously handicapped by having to speak in Forgael's language:

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

²⁸ "The Poetry of W. B. Yeats," *Southern Review*: "The William Butler Yeats Memorial Issue," VII (1941), 451.

. . . I followed him
And heard the music in the wind, and saw
A red hound running from a silver arrow.
I drew my sword to fling it in a pool—
I have forgotten wherefore.

The common sailors speak in the same languid tones that characterize *Forgael*.

The poetic language which Yeats had found appropriate to his early poetic stance as a young man grieved by a world of science and unobliging women was a serious handicap to his dramatic ambitions. If his dramatic verse was to treat conflict—as it had to—he would have to extend his language so that it could persuasively present a point of view opposing that of his early verse. Moreover, an audience that had to understand swiftly or not at all put its weight against a dense texture of metaphor and in favor of a language more simple, closer to common speech.

On Yeats' return from America in 1904 the Abbey players gave a private performance of the play for his benefit; he then turned it over to Florence Farr who presented it at a Theosophical Convention.²⁹ Yeats attended this presentation also and with it fresh in mind went about the task of making the play stageable. In his letters to Florence Farr his first mention of the rewriting records his primary objection to the play in its 1900 version:

I am at work on *Shadowy Waters* changing it greatly, getting rid of needless symbols, making the people answer each other, and making the ground work simple and intelligible. I find I am enriching the poetry and the character of *Forgael* greatly in the process.³⁰

As Yeats now saw the play, it needed radical change: it is probable that very few dramatists have had to revise a play after production so that the people will talk to each other. But most important from Yeats' own point of view was the enlightening discovery that drama and poetry were not mutually exclusive modes of aesthetic being.

²⁹ *Plays for an Irish Theatre* (1911), p. 222

³⁰ *Florence Farr, Bernard Shaw, W. B. Yeats: Letters* (London, 1942), p. 54. I follow in all quotations the spelling and punctuation of the text, which follows Yeats' own errors and quirks.

Hence he willingly and excitedly made profound changes in the play. He revised the entire concluding scene and both clarified and subtilized the motives at work in Forgael, Dectora, and Aibric. Indeed he changed the play on almost every page, making Forgael's part clear and straightforward, reducing the symbols to the minimum:

There are no symbols except Aengus and Aedaus and the birds—and I have into the bargain heightened all the moments of dramatic crisis—sharpening every knife edge. The play as it was, came into existence after years of strained emotion, of living upon tip-toe, and it is only right in its highest moments—the logic and circumstances are all wrong. I am going to make some fine sharp verses for Forgael when he enchants Dectora and I have done a bit where he sees her shadow and finds that she is mortal.³¹

At last, with logic freshly introduced, a suggestion of circumstantial detail inserted where almost none had been in the 1900 version, with the conflict of motive and character increased, the symbolism pruned and the dialogue made both more colloquial and more fitting to the individual characters, Yeats could look on the newly arising structure and brag to Miss Farr that “. . . Shadowy Waters is getting gradually finished—doubled in beauty.”³²

From the second version of *The Shadowy Waters* Yeats learned a great deal. He learned to establish clearer distinctions between characters, to place his action in more credible circumstances, and to explore more fully the logic of theme and relationship. He also learned to employ a more inclusive vocabulary; he learned, in short, to treat a more varied range of matter in a more supple technique.

The first noticeable change in the play concerns the sailors, who become the type of the man who is interested in experience only as a means to an end, who looks on piracy not as an activity good in itself—as the sailors of the first version did—but as a means of obtaining women and booty. One sailor expresses his wish for security in a language closer to the quality of his mind than that he spoke in 1900:

. . . I had thought to make
A good round sum upon this cruise, and turn—

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 62.

For I am getting on in life—to something
That has less ups and downs than robbery.

In 1900 the sailors had a more romantic conception of piracy:

I swore but yesterday if the Red God
Would end this peaceful life that rots the bones,
None should escape my sword: I would send all
To mind his cows and swine by the Red Lake.

The repetition of "Red," the insistence on sensual quality that also suggests evaluation, was deleted in the 1905 version, and the attitude of adherence to a life of pillage was qualified:

I am so lecherous with abstinence
I'd give the profit of nine voyages
For that red Moll that had but the one eye.

The sailors of 1906 are ordinary men with a normal endowment of sensuality. Yeats turns these ordinary men to account and uses them to vouch for the authenticity of Forgael's visions; they too have seen both the magical birds which guide Forgael and the figures of Aengus and Edain. Indeed, the one made lecherous with abstinence has gone so far as to try embracing the shade of Edain.

They are sensual men with a common sense view of life. Their common sense guides them to try getting Aibric to side with them when they plot against Forgael, for they are simple men who know nothing about navigation. By making them the type of the ordinary man, by distinguishing their speech and interests from those of Aibric and Forgael, Yeats establishes the circumstances which make Forgael's dream appear less vague and false: for if the sailors have seen magical birds and gods, they may truly exist.

Aibric in 1900 was a king in his own right who had followed Forgael with twenty galleys; no explanation is given of the fate of this considerable fleet, and evidently he still follows Forgael, without any resentment, out of pure affection. In 1905 Aibric was also made into a type, the loyal retainer, the older man more experienced in the ways of the world, who attempts to argue Forgael out of his impossible adventure. His jealousy of Dectora also established a secondary conflict in the play and one of the more satisfactory of the newly interpolated scenes occurs when he accuses her of luring Forgael to his death.

The major characters—Forgael and Dectora—are more finely developed than before. Forgae especially is more fully presented because his conflicts with Aibric, Dectora, and himself are heightened considerably, and as his action becomes more human and credible, the symbolism of his language contracts and almost disappears, or is placed in an elucidating context. He sounds less like an initiate into the inner circles of *The Order of the Golden Dawn* and more like a pirate-king who has some interest in mystic philosophy; although he is overcome by his vision of Aengus and Edain he has neither the belief or knowledge in occult matters that he had in 1900.

When Forgae speaks, he argues, that is, he speaks to be understood. His line of argument is clear, controlled by guiding concepts, even a little repetitious in the interests of communicating with his skeptical listeners. The new simplicity of idiom and homeliness of metaphor are evident in the freshly interpolated argument between Forgae and Aibric. Aibric points out that when a man dreams that he has spent all night in the hills with the ever-living, he must face the irreverence of one potent witness:

. . . His wife knows better.
Has she not seen him lying like a log,
Or fumbling in a dream about the house?
And if she heard him mutter of wild riders,
She knows that it was but the cart-horse coughing
That set him to the fancy.

Forgael answers this domestic scene with an argument philosophical in language yet plain and clear. In casting his weight in the balance for dreams he develops a topic statement, addressing Aibric the while, attempting to win him at the close by reminding him of their comradeship, perhaps even clapping his "Fellow-wanderer" on the shoulder:

. . . All would be well
Could we but mix ourselves into a dream,
And get into their world that to the sense
Is shadow, and not linger wretchedly
Among substantial things; for it is dreams
That lift us to the flowing, changing world
That the heart longs for. What is love itself,
Even though it be the lightest of light love,

But dreams that hurry from beyond the world
To make low laughter more than meat and drink,
Though it but set us sighing. Fellow-wanderer,
Could we but mix ourselves into a dream,
Not in its image in the mirror. . . .

Forgael and Aibric speak distinctive languages: Aibric's is homely, blunt, direct, in its movement and imagery; Forgael's is philosophic in an elementary way (sense, shadow, substantial), exalted in its lift and beat, vague at times yet always uniquely his and far easier to follow, with its four-times-repeated "dream," than was his earlier language. Even if one missed the continuous sense of the passage, on hearing it spoken by an accomplished reader of verse, it would still be evident that Forgael was talking about dreams and that he approved of them.

Forgael's speech is made simpler and plainer throughout the play, and his behaviour more complex and human, less dominated by a single motive. He wants Aibric to understand his venture if not to approve of it, and when he finally charms Dectora with his magical harp, he succumbs to the quite human regret that he did not woo and win her by fair devices. This new motive brings Forgael to earth or at least to shipboard and establishes a new conflict, within Forgael, that heightens the action and gives both Forgael and Dectora more human character. After charming Dectora, Forgael wishes to confess all:

. . . I have done so great a wrong against you,
There is no measure that it would not burst.
I will confess it all. . . .

Dectora will not listen:

. . . What do I care,
Now that my body has begun to dream,
And you have grown to be a burning sod
In the imagination and intellect?
If something that's most fabulous were true—
If you had taken me by magic spells,
And killed a lover or husband at my feet—
I would not let you speak, for I would know
That it was yesterday and not to-day
I loved him; I would cover up my ears,
As I am doing now. . . .

Forgael, of course, really has taken her by magic spells and been the cause of her husband's death at her feet, but only in the second version does Yeats see and exploit the dramatic possibilities of the situation. Simple as this dramatic irony is, the realization of it came to Yeats only as his original ambition—to write verse of a certain texture and tone—gave way to another aim: to write dramatic verse suitable to the stage.

In structure, then, and in texture the play in its second version suffered basic change. Perhaps the most important reason for this change was Yeats' newly derived knowledge that language became beautiful by becoming appropriate:

Sainte-Beuve has said that there is nothing immortal in literature except the style, and it is precisely this sense of style, once common among us, that is hardest to recover. I do not mean by style words with an air of literature about them, what is ordinarily called eloquent writing. The speeches of Falstaff are as perfect in their style as the soliloquies of Hamlet. One must be able to make a king of faery or an old countryman or a modern lover speak the language which is his and nobody else's, and speak it with so much of emotional subtlety that the hearer may find it hard to know whether it is the thought or the word that has moved him, or whether these could be separated at all.³³

In 1901 Yeats had written with evident satisfaction that his style was himself but two years later he was writing of the difficulty of developing a "sense of style" which would allow the treatment of human thought and feeling ranging the gamut from Hamlet to Falstaff. Once his aim had been to communicate only his own sense of significant experience. This was still his aim, to dramatize his view of life, but he must be able to speak a more various language, capable of expressing a point of view antagonistic to his own and so modulating his own point of view that it would sound credible from the lips of Forgael, Cuchulain, or Naisi.

The difference between the first and second versions will serve to symbolize the change in Yeats' poetry forced by his development of his "style" in accord with theatrical demands. As we have seen, he was forced to exploit through a clearer delineation of dramatic structure the basic theme and conflict of his life and art, that between *anima hominis* and *anima*

³³ *Plays and Controversies*, p. 46.

mundi. He clarified and strengthened his sense of character, he contracted his vocabulary to exclude his most esoteric symbolism, and he expanded his vocabulary to include more common language and provide an elucidating context for those symbols which he retained. He tuned his verse to suit the actual mind and voice of a distinctive living man:

I can see nothing plain; all's mystery.
 Yet, sometimes there's a torch inside my head
 That makes all clear, but when the light is gone
 I have but images, analogies,
 The mystic bread, the sacramental wine,
 The red rose where the two shafts of the cross,
 Body and soul, waking and sleep, death, life,
 Whatever meaning ancient allegorists
 Have settled on, are mixed into one joy.
 For what's the rose but that? miraculous cries,
 Old stories about mystic marriages,
 Impossible truths? But when the torch is lit
 All that is impossible is certain,
 I plunge in the abyss.

We have here the hesitancies, the doubts, of Forgael's mind, his indefiniteness and his fear of the baselessness of his belief. "Whatever meaning ancient allegorists / Have settled on" indicates more than a little qualification in Forgael's approach to his mystic adventure, and his humility at this point is far from the absurd aloofness of the 1900 version.³⁴ As far from the 1900 version, in fact, as Yeats himself was, for the increased subtlety of Forgael's character, his action, his speech, is the index of the simplification and enrichment of Yeats' poetry consequent upon his theatre experience.

3

When Yeats reached the end of his period of closest association with the Abbey, he could sum up his achievements and failures and discover a balance that favored him and his art.

³⁴ From the acting version of 1906. This version goes considerably farther in the directions taken by the second version (1905) Yeats rewrote all the speeches of the sailors in the rhythmic prose of his comedies and cut extensively in the final scene as well as rewriting some poetic dialogue in the early sections of the play. In 1911 he revised the 1905 version again, though not to the degree that he had rewritten in 1905 or 1906.

The Abbey had been established as a non-commercial theatre, perhaps the greatest in the English-speaking world. In the work of Synge, Lady Gregory and Yeats himself, it had presented some of the best original dramas of its day. The hope for a national revival of heroic poetic drama had not been realized, for the Abbey by 1911 was mainly devoted to the production of peasant drama, folk comedy, and the realistic play of urban life. Still in its repertoire and its acting the Theatre asserted and served the highest of standards, and Yeats' own contribution to dramatic literature was impressive in its bulk and perfection.

Looking at his *Plays for an Irish Theatre* (1911), Yeats could allow himself some pride: for while it excluded three of the plays written during his theatre days³⁵ he could point to five poetic plays and two plays in prose, all finely realized. Of the poetic plays two—*Deirdre* and *On Baile's Strand*—are of the highest quality. *On Baile's Strand* is among the best poetic plays of this century, and resolves almost perfectly what Yeats saw as the dramatist's general problem:

If we do not know how to construct, if we cannot arrange much complicated life into a single action our work will not hold the attention or linger in the memory, but if we are not in love with words it will lack the delicate movement of living speech that is the chief garment of life. . . .³⁶

On Baile's Strand arranges much complicated life in a single action, telling in the delicate movement of living speech a story with which Yeats was obsessed: the story of Cuchulain's conquering of his son, culminating in the hero's own death as he rushes against the waves of the sea in insane combat.

The play contains yet more complicated action, for its major conflict is not that between Cuchulain and his son but between Cuchulain and Conchubar, who represent the two opposing views of life and modes of conduct, the hero's and the administrator's:

Cuchulain. . . . I'll not be bound.
I'll dance or hunt, or quarrel or make love,

³⁵ Yeats excluded *The Pot of Broth*, *Where There is Nothing*, and the new version of the latter, *The Unicorn from the Stars*.

³⁶ *Plays and Controversies*, p. 46.

Wherever and whenever I've a mind to.
 If time had not put water in your blood,
 You never would have thought it.
Conchubar. I would leave
 A strong and settled country to my children.

Conchubar and Cuchulain are reconciled before Cuchulain's fight with his son. Yet Conchubar is the cause of Cuchulain's death, for if he had not persuaded Cuchulain to fight the unknown warrior who was wasting the shores of Ulster, Cuchulain would never have done so, would in fact have been a friend of the young man's. Finally, in his grief on discovering that he has killed his only son, Cuchulain confuses the waves with his antagonist Conchubar and dies raging and striking against them.

To hold this material at a proper distance, Yeats frames it in the complementary conflict between a blind man and a fool, who foreshadow Cuchulain's death, reveal the identity of his youthful victim to Cuchulain, and play the same roles as the great king and the great warrior, only in less dignified terms. The difference in level between them and the nobility is symbolized by the difference in language:

Blind Man. What would have happened to you but for me, and you without your wits? If I did not take care of you, what would you do for food and warmth?

Fool. You take care of me? You stay safe, and send me into every kind of danger.

When Conchubar tries to argue Cuchulain into joining forces with him, he speaks not in rhythmic prose but in blank verse:

Will you be bound into obedience
 And so make this land safe? . . .
 You are but half a king and I but half;
 I need your might of hand and burning heart,
 And you my wisdom. . . .

The hopeless nature of the struggle between the two forces is underscored when the women give a choral comment on the action:

Life drifts between a fool and a blind man
 To the end, and nobody can know his end.

At the close of the action, Cuchulain and his son are both dead, Conchubar thereby being relieved of the peril cast upon the state by both of them, and the blind man is exhorting the fool to go with him and rob the houses, which have been vacated by their owners in their desire to see mighty Cuchulain's death. The concluding lines of the play are the ironic comment of the comic world on tragic action: heroes die in magnificent insane rage, while peasants conspire to perform an act without the boldness of theft or the intelligence of swindle. Within the frame of this comic world, we discern the eternal passion of Cuchulain, the warrior and lover, roused to intensity by his conflict with Conchubar, the administrator and official, turned against his son, and finally in the extremity of pain, driven to madness. This outcome is tragic in Yeats' sense of the word, for in his death Cuchulain attains mythic status through the very excess of his grief and rage.

Merely to examine the general structure is to see how well Yeats has objectified his own interest in the conflict between the fixed and the flowing, and the structure is matched by a persuasive texture, whether women are chanting as a chorus, kings are conducting their affairs in stately blank verse, or fool and blind man are whining at each other in the rhythmic prose Yeats learned from Lady Gregory.³⁷ His characters are cleanly delineated in their motives and attachments, complex yet representative of clear forces and types, and their language is consonant with their character. Conchubar speaks a plain dignified language, relatively free of metaphor, directly communicative:

³⁷ Lady Gregory's effect on Yeats' life is of course crucial. The following plays were written in collaboration with her: *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, *The Pot of Broth*, *Where There is Nothing*, and its redaction, *The Unicorn from the Stars*. Of their collaboration on *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, Yeats writes that he first saw the action in a dream as distinct as a vision: "I thought if I could write this out as a little play I could make others see my dream as I had seen it, but I could not get down out of that high window of dramatic verse, and in spite of all you [Lady Gregory] had done for me I had not the country speech. One has to live among the people, like you, of whom an old man said in my hearing, 'She has been a serving-maid among us,' before one can think the thoughts of the people and speak with their tongue. We turned my dream into the little play, *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, and when we gave it to the little theatre in Dublin and found that the working-people liked it, you helped me to put my other dramatic fables into speech." *Plays for an Irish Theatre*, p. 224.

You play with arguments as lawyers do,
 And put no heart in them. I know your thoughts,
 For we have slept under the one cloak and drunk
 From the one wine cup. I know you to the bone.
 I have heard you cry, aye in your very sleep,
 'I have no son,' and with such bitterness
 That I have gone upon my knees and prayed
 That it might be amended. . . .

Whereas Cuchulain is more extravagant in language as in person:

I never have known love but as a kiss
 In the mid-battle, and a difficult truce
 Of oil and water, candles and dark night,
 Hillside and hollow, the hot-footed sun,
 And the cold, sliding, slippery-footed moon—
 A brief forgiveness between opposites
 That have been hatreds for three times the age
 Of this long-'stablished ground. . . .

Yet both are clear, both speak in language and imagery close to the common experience of men.

The play displays in its grace and complication how greatly Yeats learned from his years of exploring stagecraft. In *On Baile's Strand* and the other poetical plays, Yeats learned to set his moments of high passionate expression in a wider context which qualified them and set them off as fine jewels in a modest setting. The moment of lyric intensity was present chiefly at climax and stubbornly held one foot on the ground, for as Yeats said a little ruefully at one point, ". . . dramatic writing is so full of the stuff of daily life that a little falsehood . . . contradicts our experience."³⁸ The climactic moment of his plays was often more passionate than any moment in his early lyric poems. However, this passion was now presented within realistic circumstances, and the circumstances were used both to make the action and speech more credible and to give the hero an obstacle to strain against, which would force him to call up all his passionate resources. He still aimed to treat ". . . the strongest passions, passions that had nothing to do with observation,"³⁹ but by 1906 he had so far grown away

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

³⁹ *Autobiography*, p. 109.

from the pure poetry of his early years that he could quarrel with Pater's insistence on the value of that pure art, music, and even in a cantankerous moment judge the orator superior to the musician:

I in my present mood am all for the man who with an average audience before him, uses all means of persuasion . . . and but so much music as he can discover on the wings of words.⁴⁰

The movement of his art from the early poetry of vague outline and willful sadness to this poetry of passionate statement and action was a movement from sorrow to joy, from elegiac picture-making to drama:

When the tide of life sinks low there are pictures, as in *The Ode on a Grecian Urn* and in Virgil at the plucking of the Golden Bough. The pictures make us sorrowful. We share the poet's separation from what he describes. It is life in the mirror, and our desire for it is as the desire of lost souls for God; but when Lucifer stands among his friends, when Villon sings his dead ladies to so gallant a rhythm, when Timon makes his epitaph, we feel no sorrow, for life herself has made one of her eternal gestures, has called up into our hearts her energy that is eternal delight. In Ireland, where the tide of life is rising, we turn, not to picture making, but to the imagination of personality—to drama, gesture.⁴¹

As Yeats now saw it, his early poetry had been a poetry of sorrowful atmospheric painting:

I had set out on life with the thought of putting my very self into poetry, and had understood this as a representation of my visions . . . but as I imagined the visions outside myself my imagination became full of decorative landscape.⁴²

His experience with the theatre had confirmed him in his initial surmise that poetry could concern itself with the direct expression of personality, for as he said of the poet and dramatist:

If his art does not seem to be the creation of a new personality, in a few years it will not seem to be alive at all. If he is a dramatist his characters must have a like newness.⁴³

⁴⁰ *Plays and Controversies*, p. 61.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

⁴² *Essays*, p. 336.

⁴³ *Plays and Controversies*, p. 101.

Poetic art, then, whether dramatic or lyric, is the expression of personality, not morality:

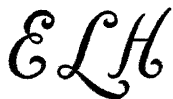
. . . my *Countess Cathleen*, for instance, was once the moral question, may a soul sacrifice itself for a good end? but gradually philosophy is eliminated until at last the only philosophy audible, if there is even that, is the mere expression of one character or another.⁴⁴

Confirmed by the theatre in his original idea that poetry was the expression of personality, he had also learned the danger of attempting to represent personality without any relation to the world of daily being, he had found that pure tragedy was impossible, only tragicomedy, admitting the reality of both *anima hominis* and *anima mundi*, could move men to rapture by starting off in the area of the known world: men must be led to ecstasy slowly.

So in his later lyrics he followed a simple pattern of experience, from the seen to the envisioned, moving from the school room with its work-a-day problems to the subtlest metaphysical speculations to the symbol of the rooted chestnut tree. Essential to the later poems is the dramatic sense of climax, the dramatic technique of contrast between the perceived colloquial and the intuited rhetorical, and the dramatic resolution of the over-riding symbol and the passion necessarily and universally attendant upon it. The structure of the Abbey dramas is in "Among School Children" and "Sailing to Byzantium" and so is the texture, the verse tuned to the needs of the living voice, the idiom basically true to the habits of educated Irish speech. Without the Abbey years, Yeats might have gone on to write magnificent lyric verse in his old age, but with the Abbey years he in fact did go on to write lyric verse dramatic in the special way that the Abbey plays are dramatic. So that one more debt of the English-speaking world to the Abbey is the dramatic magificence of Yeats' later verse.

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⁴⁴ *Autobiography*, pp. 399-400.



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PETRUS ID EST CHRISTUS:

WORD PLAY IN *PIERS PLOWMAN*, THE B-TEXT

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The medieval homilist or biblical scholar was concerned with "sentence," with penetrating behind the sense to the spiritual meaning. For him alliteration, consonance, rhyme were not simply adornments; they were principles of unity and order solemnly binding the parts of the textual division with its development. To play with the etymology or the sound of a word until it revealed an image, a symbol, or a moral was to move on the high road to Truth. He had in this the authoritative example of Augustine, whose abundant use of word-play, as Marrou remarks, "tous les lecteurs ont noté."¹ Playing with

¹ H.-I. Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la Fin de la Culture Antique* (Paris, 1938), p. 82. The reader will observe that much of this word-play is very subtle and requires the utmost attention from the modern reader. Except for James Joyce, the gift of serious word-play has been lost by modern writers. See C. I. Balmus, *Etude sur le Style de Saint Augustin dans les Confessions et La Cité de Dieu* (Paris, 1930), pp. 292-299; M. Comeau, *La Rhétorique de Saint Augustin d'après les Tractatus In Ioannem* (Paris, 1930), 66-70; C. Mohrmann, "Das Wortspiel in den Augustinischen Sermones," *Mnemosyne*, Series 3, Vol 3 (1935), pp. 33-61.

For Medieval practice see Etienne Gilson, "Michel Minot et la technique du Sermon Medieval," and "De Quelques raisonnements scripturaires usités au moyen age," in *Les Idées et les Lettres* (Paris, 1932); also Th.-M. Charland, *Artes Praedicandi* (Ottawa, 1936). Fr. Walter Jong, "Wit and Mystery: a Revaluation in Medieval Hymnody," *Speculum*, XXII (1947), advances convincing evidence for the serious and natural use of word play by religious poets. See also M. B. Ogle, "Some Aspects of Medieval Latin Style," *Speculum*, I (1926), 170-2.

words for the poet too was a serious matter so that medieval sermons and biblical exegesis helped to train the great and serious poets of the Middle Ages.

Understanding this mental climate, one is prepared to encounter without surprise frequent word-play in *Piers Plowman*. But the variety and frequency of word play in the poem, demonstrable facts, suggest the possibility that word play has importance as a factor in the structural coherence of the poem. Since *Piers Plowman* has been criticized for lack of coherence, it is important to pursue the possibility that word play may supply a key to the structural plan of the poem.²

1

Before passing to the architectural function of word play, it is necessary to establish the extraordinary variety and frequency of word play in *Piers Plowman*. There is no need to give an exhaustive, systematic list of annotated examples of such word play: a sampling and a list of additional references will suffice to the demonstration.

On the simplest level, word play in *Piers Plowman* is concerned with the use of sound (consonance, assonance, vowel harmony, repetition) to enforce or to point up meaning.³ In each case, the use of the word play may be defended as adding emphasis to an important idea. For example, Holy Church in establishing the basic distinction between herself and Lady Meed, declares that Meed has undermined loyalty to the Church and lowered its value in the eyes of temporal lords:

And ylakked my lemman that *Lewte* is hoten,
And bilowen hire to lordes that *lawes* han to kepe. II 21-2

The consonance and vowel harmony admirably point up the

² The present paper is limited to the external structure of the poem as this is suggested by word play, not by its relation to thought and cultural background. See D. W. Robertson and Bernard F. Huppé, "Piers Plowman and Scriptural Tradition," to be published by the Princeton University Press, which will consider the thought structure of the poem.

³ In the long alliterative line there is perhaps a tendency toward the extension of the similarity in sound beyond the identity of initial letters. This tendency has been kept in mind in selecting the examples noted here. They go beyond the fortuitous or merely decorative. They represent a deliberate, conscious use of identity and difference in the sound of words. They approximate the pun in enforcing meaning through sound.

idea; they do more than that in suggesting a double meaning: Lady Meed *bilows* Loyalty to lords, that is, attacks Loyalty; Lady Meed to do this *bilows* herself to lords, that is, lowers herself, toadies to them. A basic idea is established: the contrast between loyalty to the spiritual power of the Church and self-seeking abasement before temporal power. Further examples in illustration follow.⁴

- (1) For she is tikil of hire *taile talwis* of hir tonge, III 130

Part of Conscience's powerful attack on Lady Meed; the consonance in *taile* and *talwis* suggests in the manner of a pun her close affiliation with lechery (see III 55 ff.).

- (2)

'Dowel and Dobet and Dobest the thriddē,' quod he
[the friar]

'Aren three *faire* vertues and beth nauȝte *fer* to fynde.'

VIII 79-80

The friar's confidence in his knowledge of the life of perfection is ironically pointed in the approximate rhyme of *faire* and *fer*.

- (3) One of the first basic definitions of the states of perfection is enforced by a pattern of repetition, with change in connotation:

That *dredeth* god, he doth wel; that *dredeth* hym for loue,
And nouȝt for *drede* of veniaunce doth ther-fore the bettere.

IX 94-5

- (4) Dobest in the same passage is defined as not "spilling" speech. This definition is elaborated in a striking figure of speech; as a minstrel of God, speech is the "spyre of grace:

And goddes gleman and a game of heuene;
Wolde neuere the *faithful fader* his *fithel* were vntempred.

IX 100-2

The consonance and vowel harmony enforce the effectiveness of the image.

- (5) And thus thourw *cursed Caym cam care* vppon erthe.

IX 151

A chiasmic balance: the consonance of *cursed* and *care*, the rhyme of *Caym* and *cam* give emphasis to an important line.

- (6) And of o gretnesse and *grene* of *greyne* thei semen

XVI 59

⁴ All citations of the text are to Skeat's *Parallel Text* edition (Oxford, 1886): Vol. I, the text, Vol. II, notes, etc.

The subject is the three props of the tree of charity which betoken the Trinity; the imperfect rhyme of *grene* and *greyne* suggests the mystery of the coeternity of the Trinity.

(7) Jesus speaks to Judas of his betrayal:

And *gyle* in thi gladde chere and *galle* is in this lawghynge.
XVI 155

The consonance supports the rhetorical contrast.

(8) Her *fiere* fleeth fro hyr for *fere* of her tonge. XVII 318
The comment on shrewish wives is amusingly enforced by the use of consonance. Compare XVII 206-7:

And as wex and weyke and hote *fyre* togyderes
Fostren forth a flaumbe and a *feyre* leye.

With pun on *feyre* (fire, fair)

For other examples see: Prol. 107; II 84-5, 184-5; IV 184; V 150; IX 136; X 172, 178; XI 33, 283, 350, 355; XII 33; XIII 408; XIV 105, 185, 230; XV 139, 270 (see Skeat, II, 223), 379-80, 401, 501-3; XVII 40; XVIII 246, 273; XX 4.

These illustrations, along with the examples cited, establish a consistent use in the poem of word play involving consonance, rhyme, and vowel harmony. Even clearer is the poet's use of play with homonyms. A "rhyme" trick of French poetry, the homonyms serve in *Piers Plowman* to enforce meaning and point, as they do in the Prologue description of the ubiquitous worldly lawyers whose multitudinous presence in the Field of Folk is symbolic of its corruption:

3it *houed* there an hondreth in *houues* of selke,
Seriauntz it semed that serueden atte barre. Prol. 210-11

The significant verb *houed* (hovered) is reinforced by the homonymous noun *houues* (hoods): the hoods perhaps to cover the tonsure.

Other Illustrations:

(1)

Bettere is that *bote* bale adoun brynge,
Than bale be *ybette* and *bote* neuere the *bettere*. IV 92-3

Wit is here advancing a sophistical argument in defense of Wrong. The pattern of the "tongue-twister," with the play on the homonymous *bett* and *ybette*, the repetition of *bale* and *bote*, the conson-

(2) Repentance counsels Avarice on the handling of temporal goods:

Avarice should not heed temporal treasure, but rather spiritual treasure, such as Holy Church lends of God's grace during Lent.

But if god of his goodnesse graunt vs a *trewe*. VI 332

Treuthe herde telle her-of and to Peres he sent. VII 1

(4) 'Abstinence the abbess,' quod Pieres 'myne a.b.c. me
tau:te.' VII 132

(5) He can nou3te segge the *somme* and *some* aren in his lappe

(6) There *nede* hath ynome me that I mote *nede* abyde. XX 45

The number and variety of puns in the poem gives rise to a problem in selection. Attention may be called to the twelve puns listed by Skeat in his index and explained in his notes.⁵ His list, however, gives only a fractional sampling of the puns to be found in the poem. First of all may be noted that some words are repeatedly played upon. This repetition appears to

⁵ Skeat, II, 482: he lists puns on *bear, cross, fratres, good grace, heart, life, naughty, provender, queen, Robert, worts*. Skeat does not list but does explain the play on viz. XIII 19.

be a mannerism of the poet. For example, play on *leaf* (and its homonymous variations) appears no less than seven times: Prol. 49, 72, 126; I 36-8; V 138-40, 203, 263-4; XI 171, 293; XII 285-8. Play on *good* (and variations) appears even more frequently; an incomplete list of ten instances follows: V 263-4, 280; VI 332; IX 158; X 28, 393; XI 269; XIII 357; XVII 266; XVIII 216.⁶ Seven instances of play on *pure-poor* (with variations) may be listed: X 80; XI 180, 189, 241; XIV 191-2; XV 588; XVI 8. There is also repeated play on *cardinal*, Prol. 103-9 and XIX 409-13; *kin-kind* (with variations, XI 290, 293, XV 52-3; *mean-men* (with variations), XI 266, XV 300-1, 466-7 and 534-6, XVIII 214-5; *like-licam-likerous*, Prol. 30, XI 92-3, XIII 344, XV 66; *savour-saviour*, XV 152, 424-6, XVI 73-4.

Apart from this mannerism of the poet in repeating favorite puns, the puns not listed by Skeat reveal much about the poet's method of enforcing the meaning of passages which he wished to emphasize and of securing economy of meaning through the levels of significance present in word play. A pun of the simplest kind will suffice to demonstrate the method:

And for to *tulye* treuthe a *teme* shal he haue. XIX 256

The plow of *Piers Plowman*, a symbol of essential importance to the poem, is aided in its work by the word of God contained in the Four Gospels. Piers will (1) *tell* the truth with the aid of the *theme* of the Gospel (see 257 ff.); he will (2) *till* the soil of truth in the human heart with the aid of the team of the Four Gospels. The pun is simple enough, but its meaning is profoundly important for the poem. We get here at the true economy of the poem, which says freshly and vividly the ancient and difficult truths of the Medieval Church. Other illustrations of the briefly contrived, but meaningful, pun follow.

(1)

"I am *via et veritas*," seith Cryst "I may *auance* alle."

It is an *oncomely* couple bi Cryst, as me thinketh,

To 3yuen a yonge wenche to an olde feble. IX 159-61

⁶Skeat cites the pun on *good*, but indexes only one instance; similarly of his once indexed puns on *grace-grass* and *cross*, there are two and four instances respectively. The instances here listed are not intended to be exhaustive.

The noun *via* becomes the verb *auance*: this in turn suggests the pun in *oncomely*; that is, ugly and also not coming (to Christ).⁷ The true Christian is the bride of Christ; marriage for money violates this aspect of Truth, which is the way. The symbolic force of marriage has great importance for the poem.

(2)

Thanne bereth the croppe kynde fruite and clenneste of alle,
Maydenhode, anges *peres*. . . . XVI 70-1

The highest fruit of Pier's mystical tree, higher than Dowel, symbolized by marriage, higher than Dobet, symbolized by widowhood, are the *pears* of Dobest, symbolized by virginity. These *pears* are *peers* of the angels in their saintliness. The pun here simply enforces a critical figure in the poem.

(3) When Will, after the vision of the tree sets out to find Piers, he encounters first Faith and then Hope, who says to him, XVII 1:

'I am *Spes*,' quod he, 'a *spye* and *spire* after a kny3te.

Apart from the sound play, there is a pun on *spire* as the verbal noun, an *enquirer* and as the noun, *shoot* (cf. C XIII 180), that is scion of the knight Christ. It is in the coming of Christ that Hope has its being. This meaning is of great importance to the proper understanding of the relationship between Faith, Hope and their ultimate end, Charity.

(4) 'Sorwe of synnes is sauacioun of soules,' says Repentance; to which Envy replies, 'I am sori . . . I am but selde other.' (V 126-7). The play on sorrow *for* sin and sorrow *because of* sin helps with dramatic irony to reveal the essential nature of Envy.

(5)

And sith with thi self sone in owre *sute* deydest. . . .

The thrydde day after thow 3edest in owre *sute*. V 495, 504

God through his son died in order to plead for us in, our *sute* before the Judge; Christ did this by taking on our *sute*, that is flesh which is the livery of man. The prayer of Repentance looks forward to the great actions of Passus XVII-XIX; the conception which is here enforced through the pun is essential to the action of the Redemption.

Further examples: II 84 (play on *counte*, county and total; on *costes*, coasts and costs), 162 (fool and horse in *folus*): III 13-14 (*busk*, bush and bustle, *birde*, bird and bride), 88-9 (*pens*, pence

⁷ For the same play on *comely* see XV 444.

"Cloth that cometh from the weuyng is nou3t comly to were."

Note also, 440-451, puns on *fulling* and on *hethene*, (heathen, untilled earth, hence as regards heaven.)

and Fr. pense), 147 (*seleth*, seals and sells), 207 (rain and reign); IV 36-8 (goose-wing plays on the greed for food of clerks whose trade tool is the quill), 157-8 (play on Latin, *cors* in *recorded* and *acorded*); V 246 (*maneres*, the manners which Avarice lacks (261), the manors which he has acquired evilly), 304-5 (cup and *culpa*); VII 57 (play on French legal term *petit*, meaning "defectueux" and on Latin *peto*, to seek); IX 162-3; XII 39-40 (marry and Mary); XIV 197-9, 251-2 (straw, a thing of no worth and a roofing material; XV 69-71 (belief and leave off); XVI 159 (pays, Fr., meaning country, also peace, also permission; *pees*, peace and Fr., pes, "action de mettre un pied devant l'autre pour marcher"); XVIII 366-8 (*must*, must and new wine); XX 137-8 (play on the words of the marriage service.)

Finally a more developed and extended use of puns appears in the poem; for example in the description of Wrath (V 136-162):

'I am Wrath,' quod he 'I was sum tyme a frere,
And the couentes *gardynere* for to *graffe ympes*;
On limitoures and listres lesynges I *ymped*,
Tyl thei *bere leues* of low speche lordes to plese,
And sithen *blosmed* obrode in *boure* to here shriftes.
And now is fallen ther-of a *frute* that folke han wel *leuere*
Schewen her schriftes to hem. . . .
Of wykked *wordes* I, Wrath here [nuns'] *wortes* i-made.

Wrath presents himself in the allegorical guise of a gardener. Through contentiousness he produces leaves (of false belief, of toadying to temporal authority), blossoms (of lechery), fruits (which make confession no longer performed in charity). If we recall the tree of Charity, which Piers guards (XVI), the importance of this opposite tree of Wrath is understood. The play on *wortes* (edible roots) and *wordes* has significance in relation to the prevalent symbol of the *cibum spiritualis*. Man is not fed with the *verbum dei* by Wrath, but with angry words, which bring death to the spirit.⁸

Not extended over so many lines, but extremely complicated is such a pun as that in XIII-83-90:

I shal Iangle to the *Iurdan* with his Iust wombe. . . .
For now he hath dronken so depe he wil *deuyne* sone,
And preuen it by her *Pocalips* and passioun of Seynt
Auereys. XIII 83-90

⁸ A similarly developed play on the same "garden" words is to be found in

The pun on *Iurdan*, chamber pot, Friar Jordan, has been explained.⁹ *Devyne* contains a pun on explain, perhaps also the French *vin*, and on French *devin*, "erreur" (Godefroy). *Pocalips*, as Skeat (II, 193) points out, has ironic reference to the *Apocalipsis Goliae*, not to St. John. There would also appear to be a pun on the Latin *poculum*, cup, with the addition perhaps of lips (cup-lips). No *Seynt Auereys* appears, as Skeat notes. He suggests Saint Aurea who "drank only such drink as she could distill from cinders." One may also note the significant play on Latin *aurea*, gold. The pun has even further possible levels: Saint Avarice and Saint Averroës. The former is in general keeping with the picture of the friars in the poem; the latter has point for the succeeding passage (91 ff.) which satirically illustrates the friar's powers of sophistical argument: Averroës might popularly be considered the patron saint of subtle and dangerous sophistry.

Further illustrations:

(1) Again to enforce the symbolic use of food images, the poet uses such a pun as the following:

For the pore is ay *prest* to plesse the riche,
And buxome at his byddyng for his *broke loues*. XIV 220-1

The poor are ever *prest*, that is, ready or pressed, to serve the richman, to be gracious at his commands to obtain the crumbs from his table (*broke loues*). But *prest* may also mean priest (cp. X 286 & 289). With this meaning the lines have a metaphorical significance: the poor man is ever a priest who serves the rich and in his prayers serves the rich man so that he may obtain his broken love or favor. *Broke* would here have the meaning, "petty," as suggested by Skeat for Chaucer's phrase, *broken harms* (*Merchant's Tale*, 1925): that is, the poor, oppressed by need, become like false priests who serve the rich so that they may partake of their worldly bread; thus they turn their hearts from the *cibum spirituais*, the bread of the spirit, the grace of God.

(2) Dame Study warns of the dangers of Theology unless it is guided by Charity. The pattern of her remarks is as complex as the subject about which she warns is difficult:

Passus XV, 90-101. There is play on *trowes* (trees and beliefs), *leued* (leaved and beliefs); *rote* and *roten*; *more* (root and more).

⁹ Mildred Marcett, *Uhtred de Boldon, Friar William Jordan and Piers Plowman* (New York, 1938), 57-64.

Bothe lettred and lewede beth allayed now with synne,
 That no *lyf loueth* other ne owre lorde, as it semeth.
 For thorw werre and wykked werkes and wederes vnre-
 sonable,
Wedewise shipmen and witti clerkes also
 Han no *bilieue* to the *lifte* ne to the lore of phoilosophres. . . .
Shipmen and *Sheperdes* that with *shipp* and *shepe wenten*,
 Wisten by the *walkene* what shulde bityde.

The basic conception involved is that man is the image of his Maker, but through sin loses the true likeness. So, too, the world reflects its Maker; man may see in the world God's Truth unless through spiritual blindness he loses the power. The passage may be paraphrased to suggest the various levels made possible through the puns. As the much allayed *lussheborwe* looks like the sterling coin but is false, so man is stamped with the true mark (*merke of that mone*) of God (*good*), but through sin he loses his worth: he has fair speech, crown (of Reason?) and Crystendome so that he is stamped with God's mark, but his soul is weakened through sin. Through sin also the world seems to go awry: shipmen and shepherds and astronomers that used to rely on the stars have lost their belief: the moon and the stars have lost their certainty for them. The whole is held together by the puns on *mone*, money and moon; *sterlynge*, coin and star; *mark*, sign and coin. In the first meaning these words suggest the image of man as God's coin; in the second they suggest the second image of the heavens as reflecting man's loss of faith (*bilieue* to the *lifte*). The transition is reinforced by a still further play: as the sinner seems to *fare in faire speche* so shipmen and shepherds *wenten*, *wisten* by the *walkene* (walk and welkin).¹⁰

An extended and complicated use of the same technique to achieve complete unity of form and meaning may be illustrated in Passus XII 59-94:

Sapience, seith the boke swelleth a mannes soule,
 And richesse rizt so but if the *rote* be trewe;

¹⁰ There seems also to be a play on *sterlynge*, the bird, reflected in *foule alayed* (with pun on *foule*, foul, bird?). Observe the manner in which the puns are enforced by sound play: *fareth*, *faire*; *both*, *beth*; *lyf*, *loueth*, *bilieue*, *lifte*; *ship*, *shepe*.

For a similar illustration see XV 300-12: pun on God's *foules* (birds, fools to be taken care of, see IX 66); sound play in *menyng*, *men*; *fode*, *fede* *fynde* *fonde*; *lawful*, *lyfholy*, *lyflode*; *bere* *it*, *borowed*; *bidden*, *abiden*.

and namely clergy, for Crystes loue that of clergy is rote." The lines have a two-fold meaning: clergy is worthy of honor for the love of Christ, the root of clergy; that particular clergy (*namely*) should be honored which performs its clerical office for the love of Christ, the root of clergy. *Rote* serves now as a theme for variations which develop the functions of clergy rooted in Christ: *God urot* connects through sound the succeeding images, *lettre telleth*, *carectus that Cryst wrote*, *Crystes writyng saued*. Finally the discussion of clergy is framed by a variation of the sentence which introduced the subject:

Clergye [is] to comende . . . for Crystes loue,
is balanced by line 94:

For-thi I conseille the for Cristes sake Clergye that thow
louye.¹¹

An even more elaborate repetitive pattern appears in the episode of the Harrowing of Hell (XVIII). The four Daughters of God debate. Mercy (134-160) proclaims the great mystery of God's grace revealed in the Redemption:

Christ *deyde* and deth tholed this day aboute mydday.
And that is the cause of this *clips* that *closeth* now the *sonne*,
In *menyng* that *man* shal fro *merkenesse* be drawe,
The while this *lyzte* and this *leme* shal *Lucyfer* *ablende*.
For patriarkes and prophets han preched her-of often,
That *man* shal man saue thorw a *maydenes* helpe,
And that was tynt thorw *tre* *tree* shal it wyne,
And that *deth* down brouzte *deth* shal releue. . . .

The pattern is interrupted for a few lines, but is again picked up and developed to line 160. The eclipse darkening the sun is a sign of the death of the Son of God who will bring to light and make dark the light of Lucifer. Christ's death will destroy death, and so forth. In the remainder of the debate, and in the succeeding action, the balanced pattern of identity in opposites is abandoned only to reappear and to be more fully developed in Christ's speech to Satan, 331-401:

For the *dede* that thei *dede* thi deceyte it made. . . .
Ergo, soule shal soule quyte and *synne* to *synne* wende,
And al that *man* hath *mysdo* I, *man*, wyl *amende*.

¹¹ See for other illustrations: IX 79-91; XII 280-90.

Membre for membre bi the olde *lawe* I clayme it. . . .
 And *lyf* for *lyf* also and by that *lawe* I clayme it. . . .
 And that *deth* in hem *fordid* my *deth* shal releue.

In *dede*, there is word play involving *deed* and *died*; *synne* catches up Mercy's play on *sun*, *son*; *amende* balances *mysdo* but also in its sound reflects *man*, the key word of the line. The complex pattern continues in the same manner to line 401. Not only is the mystery of the Redemption suggested by the play on the identity of opposites, but the duplication of the pattern of Mercy's speech in the speech of Christ signifies the manner in which God's Mercy is made operative through the death of Christ. Meaning and structure are one.¹²

An interesting example of the use of word play to bind together a dramatic sequence is to be found in Passus III. The word play is used here to indicate Lady Meed's sophistry, her essential falseness; the play on words becomes a device of dramatic characterization. Conscience, before the King, makes the charge against her, "ȝowre fadre she felled thorw fals biheste." (III 126) An historical allusion seems intended: Conscience is addressing the King (particularized for the moment as Edward III).¹³ Conscience here suggests that Edward II had lost his life because he had been misled by flatterers who had used him for their own gain (Meed). Lady Meed replies to this charge:

Ac thow has famed me foule bifor the kynge here.
 For kulled I neuere no kynge ne conseilled ther-after,
 Ne dede as thow demest I do it on the kynge. III 185-7

Her answer involves a subtle equivocation. It is true that she

¹² See also the unifying word play pattern in the extended speech of Patience, XIV 105-181

¹³ See *PMLA*, LIV (1939), 44-52. The allusion has been prepared for by word play in Passus II:

And Mede is moylere a mayden of gode
 And myȝte kisse the kynge for *cosyn*, an she wolde. II 131-2

The puns are clearly ironic in intention: maiden of God, otherwise maiden of goods, that is, possessing wealth; *Cosyn*, closeness of relationship, otherwise in the French meaning of the word as recorded by Godefroy, "cosin, dupe." Lady Meed does, in fact, attempt to dupe the king. Since it is possible that the poet intended in Lady Meed to suggest the contemporary particularization of her, Alice Perrers, the mistress of Edward III, there may be a third level to the pun: Godefroy also records "cosine, fille de joie."

and her followers did not kill the king: her success (in the flatterers who represent her) rests on the king's remaining alive. She plays with the literal meaning of what Conscience has said: "she herself did not kill the king." His meaning she avoids. Still later she attempts a further piece of verbal trickery (line 332) in partially citing in her defense the text, "*Honorem adquiret qui dat munera*." But Conscience demonstrates her sophistry: ¹⁴ he declares that she is like the lady who read *omnia probate* at the bottom of her page. This pleased her as it might not have if she had turned the page and read the remainder, *quod bonum est tenete*. The text which Lady Meed partially cited is actually a condemnation of Meed:

And if 3e seche Sapience eft fynde shal 3e that folweth,
A ful teneful tixte to hem that taketh mede.
And that is, *animam autem aufert accipientium*, & 344-6 ¹⁵

One final example of the use of word play in the structure of a part of the whole poem may be indicated. The General Prologue gives an effect of confusion in order, of the greatest variety employed to give a single effect. This *tour de force* is achieved in part by the subtle use of structural word play to bind together the long passage which introduces the Folk of the Field, 20-143. Only a suggestion of the method may be attempted here since a complete analysis would involve quoting almost the entire passage. The pattern may, however, be indicated. At the beginning of the passage verbal repetition is used to establish the three basic types of folk: *Some putten hem* (20 and 23), *putten hem* (25), *somme* (31 and 33): Verbal and ideational repetition (with verbal variation) is employed to establish a pattern of cross-reference: *pleyed* (20), *murthes of mynstralles* (33) suggest the *japers* and *janglers* of 35, the opposite of those who *put themselves to prayer* (25). What Paul *precheth of jangelers* (38) suggests by contrast the

¹⁴ See *Speculum*, XXII (1947), 614

¹⁵ For other examples of the use of word play for ironic characterization see the confession of Avarice, V 232-9; the "sotilling" of a lord with the meaning of fortitude, the cardinal virtue, so that it takes the meaning, "exaction," XIX 456-61. The king who speaks directly after the lord also plays sophistically with the meaning of justice in a manner reminiscent of the goliard in the Prologue 139-142, see *Speculum*, XXII (1947), 587.

preaching of the friars (58-9), of the pardoners (68). The use of repetition may be seen to pervade the whole passage.

Going beyond the use of sustained word play in the construction of parts of the poem, we find in the figure of Christ's Passion as a joust, a pattern of word play established in Passus XVI and recurrently developed to Passus XX. The thematic figure is subtly and unobtrusively prepared for by a word play (XVI) which seems without significance until it is taken in the context of what ensues:

That one Iesus, a *Iustice* sone most Iouke in her chambre. . . .
And thanne shulde Iesus *Iuste* there-fore bi Iuggement of
armes. XVI 92-95

The word play figure of the Son of Justice who will joust as the champion of Mercy is developed briefly in the passus. The infant Christ was "of fiȝtyng couthe to haue y-fouȝte with the fende ar ful tyme come." But Piers Plowman knows the proper time, and instructs Christ in surgery so that he may heal himself of his wounds. (100-108) A brief account of Christ's mission culminates in an account of His jousting on Good Friday:

[Jesus] Iusted in Ierusalem a Ioye to vs alle.
On crosse vpon Caluarye Cryst toke the bataille,
Aȝeines deth and the deuel. . . . 163-165

Will now meets Faith, who is a herald of arms seeking "a ful bolde bachelor," known "by his blasen." (179) He next encounters Hope, also described in martial terms as a spy enquiring after a knight. This knight is Christ, prefigured as the Samaritan whom Will next meets. The Samaritan is going "to a Iustes in Iherusalem." (XVII 51). The image, however, is not fully developed until Passus XVIII 10-92; the references in XVI and XVII have been preparatory. In XVIII one like the Samaritan and Piers Plowman comes, on the back of an ass, to be knighted in Jerusalem. He is heralded by Faith, who explains that he will joust in Piers' arms against the fiend, false and death. He jousts on the cross and is struck through the heart by Longeus, the "blind bachelor." But Christ's blood, "spronge down by the *sperre* and *vnspere*d the kniȝtes eyen." (86) Longeus, the "champioun chiualer" of the Jews (99), kneels in defeat and begs mercy. The Harrowing of Hell ensues. In

The most striking illustration of the method is in the extraordinary development of what seems to be the first of the many puns in the poem, Prologue 14, "I seigh a toure on a toft trielich ymaked." *Trielich* sustains *three* meanings: excellently (Fr. *trier*); truly (the tower of Truth); *triune* (the Truth is in the Trinity). The word play here established is fully developed in the theme of Holy Church's sermon to Will, Passus I, which is held together by a word pattern based on the same play with *three*. Holy Church has a triple theme: Truth (that is, God), the Tower (Heaven), its treasure (the love of Truth):

'The toure vp the toft,' quod she 'Treuthe is there-inne. . .
And therefore [God] hy3te the erthe to helpe 3ow vchone
Of wollen, of lynnen of lyflode at nede,
In mesurable manere to make 3ow at ese. I 12-19

To achieve the tower of Truth, one must use the treasure of this world in truth for God's Glory. The actual word "tresore" is introduced by Will; he asks concerning money to whom "that tresore appendeth?" (44) From this point repetitive play with the triple theme of Truth, Tower, Treasure, sets the pattern for Holy Church's instruction:

For ri3tful reson shulde rewle 3ow alle,
And kynde witte be *wardeyne* 3owre *welthe* to kepe,
And *tutour* of 3oure *tresore* and take it 3ow at nede. 54-6

The image here is that of the Tower of the flesh; the word, *tower*, is picked up in *tutour* (A-text *tour*).

The opposite of the Tower of Truth is the dungeon of Hell; in Holy Church's explanation of the dungeon, the pattern of the triple theme is retained: the tower of Truth is balanced by *castel of care* (61); Truth by *falshed* (64); the treasure of Truth by the treasure of False. As one must trust to God to achieve the treasure of truth, conversely one who trusts to false treasure is soon betrayed. (70) Will, mistakenly thinking all treasure is false, declares, "Teche me to no *tresore*." Holy Church explains that treasure has, in addition, a spiritual meaning: it is the love of Truth (God):

'Whan alle *tresores* aren *tried*,' quod she 'trewthe is the best;
I do it on *deus caritas* to deme the *sothe*;
It is as *dereworth* a drewery as *dere god* hymseluen

Here is introduced the theme of Love as identical with God and thus with Truth. Love is the treasure of Truth, a proposition developed from the theme, *deus caritas*, with the verbal connection between treasure and love made in the phrase, *dere-worth as dere god*, a play on *dear God* and *dear good*, that is, treasure. The consequent exposition contains frequent repetition of the basic play on three. As rightful reason, an aspect of Truth, is to rule mankind in the use of treasure (54-6), so kings and knights should "kepe" Truth according to reason; they should take transgressors "til *treuthe* had *ytermyned* her *trespas*," and hold with those "that wolden al *treuthe*," nor abandon them "for loue ne for lacchyng of syluer." (94-101) David made knights "and did hem *swere* on here *swerde* to serue *treuth* euere." (103) Christ in heaven taught the angels "bi the *Trinitee treuthe* to knowe." (109) In contrast to Christ and his angels are Lucifer and the devils. As these are punished, so will the followers of Truth be rewarded, "Ther *treuthe* is in *Trinitee* and *troneth* hem alle." Holy Church pauses to sum up:

Whan alle *tresores* arne *ytried* *treuthe* is the beste. . . .
 Lereth it this lewede men for lettred men it knowen,
 That *treuthe* is *tresore* the *triest* on erthe. 133-5

(The play on the syllable *tre* should be noted; its significance will be discussed below).

Will now asks for further instruction in Truth. Holy Church's reply is to elaborate the image of love as the treasure of truth: "To louye thi lorde leuer than thi-selue . . . this I trowe be *treuthe*." (141-3) Truth tells that "loue is *triacle* of heuene"; it is also found in the human heart (163).¹⁷ Those who are wardens of God's treasure on earth, the rich and powerful and the priests to whom has been entrusted spiritual treasure, these must govern their trespere in love, the treasure of truth. To

¹⁷ The passage, 140-163, itself presents an elaborate pattern of word play: Repetition of *kynde knowing in herte* frames the passage as does the play in 140 on *kenneth* (is born, knows) and in 162 on *herte*, *there is the heuede* (source, hei3 welle, and head). There is a pun on *triacle* as a sweet spice (species, spice). Word play in *synne*, *sene*; *loue*, *liste*, *leueth*. The latter play leads in turn to establishing the image of *loue* as the *plente of pees* (plant and plenty).

covet worldly goods "is no *treuthe* of the *trinitee* but *treccherye* of helle." (196) Again Holy Church summarizes: ¹⁸

For-thi I sey as I seide ere by the textis,
 Whan alle *tresores* ben ytryed *treuthe* is the beste.
 Now haue I tolde the what *treuthe* is that no *tresore* is
 bettere,
 I may no longer lenge the with now loke the owre lorde!
 204-7

The basic theme of Holy Church's lesson has been the *treuthe of the Trinitee*. Implicit in the themal statement is a play on the syllable *tre* (three). This word play is developed and elaborated in the course of the passus; for example, *tried* (85), *troneth* (131), *triest* (135), *triale* (146). *Triest* represents the same pun as that in Prologue 14. *Triale* plays not only on the meaning of the word (see above note 17), but on its first syllable, which would seem also to be true of *tresore*, *tried*. Correlated with this word play is another, as we have seen, of directly opposite signification, false treasure, "That *trusten* on [False's] *tresore* *bitrayeth* he sonnest." (70) We may follow this two-sided play on three through the course of the poem; first a play on false treasure in III 123:

Truste of hire [Lady Meed's] *tresore* *trieth* ful manye.

Both sides are found in Passus VII:

- (1)
 Thise foure the fadre of heuene made to thise folde in comune;
 Thise ben *treuthes tresores* *trew*e folke to helpe. 53-4
- (2)
 Ac to *trust* to thise *triennales* *trewly* me thinketh,
 Is not so syker for the soule certis, as is Dowel.
 For-thi I rede 3ow, renkes that riche ben on this erthe,
 Vppon *trust* of 3owre *tresoure* *triennales* to haue.
 Be 3e neuere the balder to breke the ten hestes. 179-183

¹⁸ The return of the theme, truth the treasure, is clear in its repetition. The passage which effects the return presents a complicated pattern of word play: in 180 *good*, *god*, *godelich*; 184, *fath faste*; 185, *ded*, *dedes*. The simile of Malkin's maidenhead for which she had no credit since no man desired it (see Cassidy, *MLN*, LXIII (1948), 52-3) suggests the idea of priests who have no credit for their chastity since they are without charity; there is a subsequent pattern of repetition built on this base. In *treuthe of the trinitee* (196) we come back to the themal restatement to the accompaniment of word play: *dele* repeated 197,

The ideational relation between Truth and the Trinity underlies the somewhat obscure definitions in IX of the three states of perfection, Dowel, Dobet, Dobest. In the first definition (94-97) Dobest is defined as not "spilling" speech. The reason for this appears only if we recall the Truth of the Trinity. Dobest speaks truth, not falsehood, "spilled speech." Moreover, truth-speaking Dobest, as we discover, IX 204, "springs from Dowel and Dobet": in this relationship is mirrored the Trinity with its triune truth. The final definition in which the three states are shown to mirror the Trinity is developed from the image of *true* marriage, which also reflects the mystery of the Trinity:

Trewe wedded libbing folk in this worlde is Dowel. . . .
 And thus was wedlock ywrouȝt with a mene persone;
 First bi the faderes wille and the frendes conseil,
 And sytthenes bi assent of hem-self as thei two myȝte acorde,
 And thus is wedloke ywrouȝt and god hym-self it made
 107-116

As the virgin-martyrs come from true wedded couples, so does Dobest spring from Dowel and Dobet of which it is a combination. As marriage mirrors the Trinity, so the three states of perfection also mirror the Trinity: from Father and Son proceeds the Holy Ghost; from Dowel and Dobet proceeds Dobest; yet the three persons are one God as the three states are one life of perfection.

The play upon the truth of the Trinity reappears at the end of Passus XII, 284-291:

Ac *treuth* that trespassed neuere. . . .
 Ne wolde neuere *trewe* god but *treuth* were allowed;
 And where it worth or worth nouȝt the bileue is grete of
 treuth,
 And an hope hangyng ther-inne to haue a mede for his
 treuthe.

For *Deus dicitur quasi dans vitam eternam suis, hoc est, fidelibus; et alibi; si ambulauero in medio umbre mortis, etc.*

199; *latter* (197), *lateth* (200), *lenger lenge* (207); *lokke of loue* (200), *Loue leche of lyf* (202), *loke the oure lorde* (207), the suggestion for this last word pattern coming perhaps from line 165, *loked on us with loue*.

The glose graunteth vpon that vers a gret mede to treuthe,
And witt and wisdome . . . was somme tyme *tresore*,
To kepe with a comune. . . .

The word play is like that in III 288-292:

Shal na more Mede be maistre, as she is nouthe. . . .
And who-so *trespasseth* ayein *treuthe*. . . .
Leute shal don hym lawe. . . .

The triumph of loyalty is heralded both in III and XII with the verbal play on *three*. There is more than superficial structural binding involved. According to the Athanasian creed, belief in the Trinity is the basis of the Catholic faith: the truth of the trinity gives true treasure to the loyal believer in Truth.

The treasure of Truth is Charity as Holy Church explains in developing the theme *deus caritas* (I 86 ff.) This same message is the burden of Will's vision of the Tree of Charity which Piers guards (XVI). Will's introduction to the *tree* is accompanied by the familiar play on *three*; XVI 3-63:

'Ac ȝet I am in a were what charite is to mene.'
'It is a ful *trye tree*,' quod he *trewly* to telle. . . .
Pacience hatte the *pure tre* and *pore* symple of herte,
And so, thorw *god* and thorw *good* men groweth the frute
Charite. . . .'

And [Piers] bad me toten on the *tree* on toppe and on rote.
With thre pyles was it vnder-pizte. . . .
Ac I [Will] have thouȝtes a *threve* of this *thre* piles. . . .
For alle ar thei aliche longe. . . .
And to my mynde, as me thinketh on o *more* thei growed. . . .
'That is *soth*, seide Pieres. . . .
And I haue tolde the what hiȝte the *tree* the *Trinite* it
meneth.'

In the description of the tree fruits are mentioned (68-72): matrimony, continence and maidenhood. We have already seen marriage used as a symbol both of the Trinity and of the three states of perfection: from true wedded folk spring the virgin martyrs (IX 107-16). The same symbolism is involved in the fruits of the Tree of the Trinity. The figurative connection between the Trinity and marriage is further developed in Passus XVI 201-224:

And there [God] hym lyked and loued in *thre* persones hym shewed.

And that it may be *so* and *soth* manhode it sheweth,
Wedloke and widwehode with virgynyte ynempned,
In *toknyng*e of the *Trinite* was *taken* oute of *o man*.
Adam owre aller fader Eue was of hym-selue,
And the issue that thei hadde it was of hem bothe,
And either is otheres Ioye in *thre* sondry persones,
And in heuene and here *one* syngulere name;
And thus is mankynde or manhede of matrimoigne yspronge,
And bitokeneth the *Trinite* and *treue* bileue. . . .
Thus in *thre* persones is perfetliche manhede,
That is, man and his make and moillere her children,
And is nouȝt but gendre of o generacioun bifor Iesu Cryst
in heuene. . . .

Later in Passus XVI Faith searching for Charity affirms the belief in the Trinity, the first article of faith. Finally, in XVII, the Samaritan (Charity) explains the Trinity to Will in the developed similes of the fist, the candle, flint (131-256). The Samaritan's teaching represents the expository climax of the poem toward which the series of word plays on *three* have been leading. Similarly in Passus XVII the converse word play on *tre* and *False* is brought to a climax in the explicit development of the three evils that beset mankind; XVII 315-342:

Thre thinges there ben that doth a man by strengthe
Forto fleen his owne hous. . . .
Thise *thre* that I telle of ben thus to vnderstonde;
The wyf is owre wikked flesshe. . . .
The reyne that reyneth there we reste sholde,
Ben siknesses and sorwes. . . .
Ac the smoke and smolder that smyt in owre eyghen,
That is coueityse and vnkyndenesse that quencheth goddes
mercy.

The progression of evil conversely pictures the progression of good: the entire pattern, here illustrated, is made complete.

Through the course of the long poem Will falls asleep, wakes and falls asleep again many times. The pattern of this activity is clearly of considerable importance in achieving unity of structure. It is significant that in these passages of transition, the poet has made considerable use of word play. The effect is to give unity of pattern to the most obvious repetitive event in the poem. The use of word play with its deliberate ambiguity

in the levels of meaning sets precisely the right tone for the transition from waking to dream allegory. Perhaps even more significant is the poet's handling of Will in those waking states which provide the framework for his dreams. Apart from the unity of pattern achieved through the use of word play, the poet has concentrated on details of Will's appearance and surroundings in such a manner as to make them constants upon which variations are played. These constants are fixed in the opening description of Will where attention is directed to five details: (1) *the time and season of the year*; (2) *the surroundings of Will's resting place*; (3) *sounds*; (4) *his costume*; (5) *his wandering, his weariness or other references to his state of mind*. In what follows, the "waking-sleeping" framework will be reviewed to illustrate (a) the consistent use of word play in making the transitions from waking to sleeping (and the reverse); (b) the carefully planned use of the five basic descriptive details in Will's waking states. (For convenience marginal numbers will be used to refer to the five details as they are listed above: comment will be made only where the variation is such as to warrant it).

In a somer seson whan softe was the sonne,	(1)
I shope me in shroudes as I a shepe were,	
In habite as an heremite vnholý of workes,	(4 & 5)
Went wyde in this world wondres to here	
Ac on a May mornynge on Maluerne hulles. . . .	(1 & 2)
Me byfel a ferly of fairy me thouȝte;	
I was wery forwandred and went me to reste	(5)
vnder a brode banke bi a bornes side,	(2)
And as I lay and lened and loked in the wateres,	
I slombred in a slepyng it <i>sweyued</i> so merye.	(3)
Thanne gan I to meten a merueilouse <i>sweuene</i>	

Pro. 1-11

Apart from the details of setting, transitional word play is employed in *sweyued*—*sweuene*. The Prologue ends with the sound (3) of London street cries. Will awakes from his slumber at the beginning of Passus V as the King goes to Church (to the sound of church bells or the sound of singing?):

The kyng and his kniȝtes to the <i>kirke</i> wente	(2 & 3)
To here <i>matynes of the day</i> and the masse after.	(1 & 3)
Thanne waked I of my wynkyng and <i>wo was with-alle</i> ,	
	(5)

That I ne hadde sleped sadder and yseizen more.

Ac ere I hadde faren a fourlonge feyntise me hente, (5)
 That I ne myȝte ferther a-foot for defaute of slepyng;
 And sat softly adown and seide my bileue,
 And so I babeled on my bedes thei brouȝte me a-slepe. (3)
 V 1-8

What next awakens Will is the *sound* of the quarrel between Piers and the priest; the awakening is accompanied by a play on *meteles*, dream, meat-less, dream-less, along with the basic descriptive details:

And I thorw here wordes a-woke and waited aboute, (3)
 And seighe the sonne in the south sitte that tyme, (1)
Meteles and moneless on Maluerne hulles, (2 & 5)
 Musyng on this *meteles*; and my waye ich ȝede. (5)
 Many tyme this *meteles* hath maked me to studye
 Of that I seigh slepyng if it so be myȝte,
 And also for Peres the plowman ful pensyf in herte. . . (5)
 VII 139-145

Will remains pensively awake for the remainder of the Passus and the beginning of Passus VIII. The time (1), the place (2), sound (3), Will's costume (4) are all marked. His puzzlement of mind (5) is indicated in his meeting with the two friars, "I haue no kynde knowyng . . . to conceyue alle ȝowre wordes." Simple sound play accompanies his slumbering (*lynde-launde*, *murthe-mouthes*, 65-67):

Thus yrobed in russet I romed aboute (4 & 5)
 Al a somer sesoun for to seke Dowel. . . (1)
 VIII 1-2
 And thus I went wide-where walkyng myne one, (5)
 By a wilde wilderness and bi a wode-syde. (2)
 Blisse of tho briddes abyde me made, (3)
 And vnder a *lynde* vpon a *launde* lened I a stounde, (2)
 To lythe the layes the louely foules made. (3)
Murthe of her *mouthes* made me there to slepe. . .
 VIII 62-69

He is next awakened, Passus XI, by Scripture's scornful words (3). Apart from the awakening by sound, attention may be directed to the echo of V 3 in XI 4 (wynkyng) and of VIII 68 in XI 5 (*merueilleous meteles mette*). Reference is made to Will's wrathful mood in line four (5). In Passus XIII after Will awakens he goes for a long time as a "mendicant." Word play is worked into the entire passage which deals with his waking thoughts:

And I awaked there-with *witles* nerehand, (5)
 And as a freke that fre were forth gan I walke
 In manere of a mendynaunt many a ȝere after, (1 & 5)
 And of this *metyng* many tyme moche thouȝt I hadde. . .
 And how that Elde manaced me myȝt we eue *meten*. . .

And how that *lewed* men ben *ladde* but owre *lorde* hem helpe
 Thorough *unkonnyng* *curatoures* to *incurable* peynes. . . .
 Of *Kynde* and of his *connyng* and how *curteise* he is to bestes,
 And how *louynge* he is to bestes. . . .
Leueth he no *lyf* lasse ne more. . . .
 And sitthen how *Ymaginatif* seyde *vix iustus saluabitur*.¹⁹

XIII 1-19

Hawkin's wailing awakens Will at the end of Passus XIV. The beginning of Passus XV suggests Will's frame of mind in describing his attitude toward the powerful: he is taken as a fool (compare XIII 1). He is rocked to sleep by Reason, XV 11 (to the sound of a lullaby?). As the Samaritan gallops away, XVII 349-50, Will awakes (through the sound of the hooves?):

Wolleward and wet-shoed went I forth after, (4 & 5)
 As a *reccheles* *renke* that of no wo *reccheth*, (5)
 And *jede* forth lyke a *lorel* al my *lyf-tyme*, (1)
 Tyl I wex wery of the worlde and wylned eft to slepe,
 And *lened* me to a *lenten* and longe tyme I slepte. (1)

XVIII 1-5

Line 4 echoes XV 5 (*lorel*), 5 echoes VIII 65 (*lened*); *lenten* plays on *lend* and *Lent*. In XIX 1-5 Will awakes, dresses himself dearly and prepares to go to church. The sound of the mass puts him to sleep (cp. V 1-2). The state of Will's mind in his next awakening, XX 1-5, echoes that in VII, XI, XVIII. *Mette* in line four (met) is a play on *mette* (dream), XIX 478:

Thanne as I went by the way whan I was thus awaked, (5)
 Heuy-chered I *jede* and elynge in herte; (5)
 I ne wiste where to ete ne at what place. (2)
 And it *neighed* *nyeghe* the *none* and with Nede I *mette*. (1)

XX 1-4

Will's final awakening, the last line of the poem, occurs to the sound of Conscience praying:

And sitthe he gradde after grace til I gan awake. XX 384

Finally, and of most central importance, the dreamer, Will, may be shown to represent a play on words. Will may, of course, be the name of the poet himself, but the name would seem to have significance of greater import for the poem than this. Will is seeking to know God. It is possible for man to know God because man has been made in God's image, possessing three faculties, intellect, memory and will. Through these faculties man apprehends.²⁰ It is curious that Will in his

¹⁹ See Skeat, II, 189 for the play on *vix*.

²⁰ See for example, "Appendix ad Hugonis Opera Dogmatica," in Migne, *PL*,

search encounters both memory and intellect but not will. The reason is actually very simple: Will *is* the will. This play on words explains why Holy Church at the beginning of the poem instructs Will in the fundamentals of faith: such instruction is necessary to the untutored will. More obviously it explains the impatience and contentiousness of Will in arguing with the two friars (VIII), and with Dame Scripture. To her correct teaching on salvation he answers:

Contra . . . that can I repreue,
And preue it bi Peter and bi Poule bothe. X 345-6

Wrongheaded wilfulness could not be better illustrated than in the attempt to answer Scripture by Scripture.

The wilfulness of Will is further indicated by Will's reaction when Scripture 'scorns' him:

Tho wepte I for wo and wratth of her speche,
And in a wynknyg wratth wex I aslepe. XI 3-4

It is at this point that Will is led into the land of longing since man's will, disobedient to the word of God, is misled into longing for the goods of the world.²¹ The matter is put beyond reasonable doubt by the word play which accompanies the description of Will's fall:

'And in this myroure thow [Will] myȝte se myrthes ful
manye,
That leden *the wil* to lykyng al thi lyf tyme.'
The secounde seide the same 'I shal suwe *thi wille*. . .'
'The freke that folwed *my wille* [Fortune] failled neuere
blisse! XI 19-25

Age and Holiness bemoan Will's fall, XI 43-4:

'Alas, eye!' quod Elde and Holynesse bothe,
'That *witte* shal torne to wrecchednesse for *wille* to haue
his lykyng.

177, col. 794. "Vultus Patris est potentia; Filii, sapientia; Spiritus sancti, benignitas. Lumen vultus est memoria, intellectus, voluntas. Sed quia ad vultum videndum accedere non possumus, habemus lumen, id est imaginem et similitudinem. Per imaginem ipsum apprehendimus, id est per memoriam, intellectum, et voluntatem." See the extended discussion in Lombard, *PL*, 192, 530-1.

²¹ See Augustine, "Enarrationes in Psalmos," *Opera Omnia*, IV (Gaume Fratres, 1835-6): "Velle proprium habere est humane infirmitatis." (266a) "Magna et usitata in hominibus perversitas est, ut cum debeant ipsi vivere secundum voluntatem Dei, Deum velint vivere secundum voluntatem suam" (602 d) "voluntatem propriam facit, quisquis a Deo non docetur." (2276 b)

Will's name is clearly played upon. Finally, play on Will, the dreamer, and will, the faculty, may be illustrated in the episode of the Confessions of the Sins. Will figures in his own visions, and in this episode he is pictured as moved by Repentance, preliminary to the confessions:

Thanne ran Repentance and reherced his teme,
And gert Wille to wepe water with his eyen. V 61-2

The will of man is turned to God through repentance: here Will is almost completely to be equated with the faculty of will.²²

Moreover, the central character in Will's vision, Piers the Plowman, is created from the allegorical or mystical play on the word, Peter. This is made clear, without any need for elaborate explanation, in Passus XV:

There-fore by coloure ne by clergye knowe shaltow Hym
neuere,
Noyther thorw wordes ne werkes *but thorw wille one.*
And that knoweth no clerke ne creature in erthe,
But Piers the Plowman *Petrus, id est, Christus.* XV 203-6

The full symbolic meaning of Piers the Plowman is involved in this allegorical play on words. The central position given to will in the passage is also significant since the poem is concerned with Will's search for the meaning of Piers Plowman. At the heart of the great poem, its unifying principle, is a play on words: God may be known only through Will, that is, the will, instructed by Piers, *Petrus, id est, Christus.*

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²² This equation of Will with will would explain the B-text reading of V 182-7:

'Now repent the Wrath,' quod Repentaunce and reherce thow neuere
Conseille that thow cnowest bi contenaunce ne bi ri3te;
And drynke nou3te ouer delicatly ne to depe noyther,
That *thi wille* bi cause ther-of to wrath my3te torne.
Esto sobrius, he seyde and assoiled *me* after,
And bad *me wilne* to wepe *my wikkednesse* to amende. V182-7

The will is the instrument of wrath; Will is himself a wrathful man by the evidence of the poem and has earlier in the passus been moved by Repentance. Probably these facts with the appearance of *thi wille* (185) suggested to the poet the word-play transition to the dreamer, Will: *thi wille—me wilne*. Compare XV 44. In the C revision, the word play is carefully removed, and the whole passage turned directly toward Wrath. Comparison of the two passages suggests revision in C, not textual corruption in B. The C version is the more satisfactory one; the B-text is the more revealing of the poet's identification of Will with will.

THE NATURE OF DR. JOHNSON'S RATIONALISM

By J. H. HAGSTRUM

In *From Classic to Romantic* W. J. Bate has presented Samuel Johnson as "a Christian and a very English Socrates," classical rather than neo-classical in his dedication to humanistic and ethical rationalism and in his conception that art should be a revelation of general nature. Such an analysis, valuable though it is in emphasizing the dignity of Johnson's critical thought and sound though it is in preceiving the basic assumptions upon which the Johnsonian system rests, should not be allowed to stand without important qualification.¹ It is the purpose of this paper to describe briefly that which is traditionally rationalistic and humanistic in Johnson's conception of reason and then more fully to discuss the vitally significant empirical strains in his criticism, to clarify the hitherto unnoticed but, I think, perfectly clear relationship in him between the empirical and rational faculties, and finally to call attention to his perception that the reason was not only a restraining, normalizing force but was instinct with positive energy of its own. This acute awareness and the corollary one that literature is an expression of all the faculties of the mind energized and active enabled Johnson to transcend that dry and almost mathematical rationalism with which he has sometimes been accused of being tainted and to over-leap those boundaries which neo-classicism at its most rigid had fixed between the separate faculties of the mind.

1

Bate comments properly that Johnson's conception of the nature of rational insight "is not easy to define with precision." The basis of that difficulty (and what student of Johnson has not been vexed by it!) perhaps lies in the fact that his use of the word *reason*, although extensive and forcible, does not seem

¹ See Bate, pp. 59ff. Bate is aware of empirical and even anti-rationalist elements in Johnson's criticism, but he makes nothing of them. He says, in passing, that Johnson "certainly preferred an accurate presentation of empirical or particularized nature to a completely lifeless idealization" (p. 64). See also pp. 74 and 79.

to have rested upon a satisfactory abstract conception of the term. In *Idler* no. 24 (1758) he rejected a currently popular definition of the soul on the grounds that "it supposes what cannot be proved, that the nature of mind is properly defined," and eight years earlier, in *Rambler* no. 41, he averred that no accurate answer can be given to the question of how reason differs from instinct because "we do not know in what either reason or instinct consists." Nevertheless, the following conclusions (here stated in the briefest summary) can be drawn with confidence from a fairly thorough examination of all the important passages of both moral and literary criticism in which Johnson invokes reason and bases his argument upon it.

1. *Reason and universal truth.* When, in the *Life of Cowley*, Johnson says that "truth, indeed, is always truth, and reason is always reason; they have an intrinsic and unalterable value, and constitute that intellectual gold which defies destruction," he refers to the following universals which should always, in some way or other, be expressed by the poet and critic: (a) *moral and religious truth* and (b) *the immutable order of nature and the unalterable mind of man.*

- (a) Since "he who thinks rationally thinks morally," reason, assisted by Christian revelation, will lead man to "those general and transcendental truths" which for Johnson were expressed in humanistic and Christian ethics. The writer, who must also be guided by this ethical insight, should "consider right and wrong in their abstracted and invariable state" and should not be a promiscuous recorder of things as they are. He ought rather to "distinguish those parts of nature, which are most proper for imitation" and exhibit "the most perfect idea of virtue, the highest and purest that humanity can reach." The highest literature thus becomes the result of a selective imitation, guided by ethical perceptions, of an ideal moral reality. In this important respect Johnson's position must be sharply distinguished from all literary naturalism and from all imitations of reality guided exclusively by aesthetic considerations.
- (b) Johnson often uses fidelity to the *order of nature* and to the *unalterable mind of man* as a test of literary value: literature must conform to the "settled and unalterable nature of things," to "the order of nature and the operations of the intellect," to "the nature of things and the structure of the human mind"; it must be "adequate to our faculties and agreeable to nature." When followed, these principles

have a two-fold effect upon literature: it attains permanent significance and avoids the temporary, the local, the superficial, and the accidental; it also represents reality and avoids the chimerical, the fantastic, the hypothetical, and that which is only the arbitrary prescription of authority and tradition.

To follow nature, in Johnson's view, is to represent in art observable reality. "What is commonly called *nature* by the critics," he says in the discussion of epitaphs which concludes the *Life of Pope*, is "a just representation of things really existing, and actions really performed."²

2. *The operations of reason considered as a faculty of the mind.* It is possible to distinguish five separate but closely related functions of reason, the human faculty, in Johnson's discussion of literature:

- (a) As that quality in man which understands and appropriates, to the practical purposes of life, general truth and reality, reason watches scrupulously the data of the senses and the combinations of the imagination (which creates fictions and adorns nature) to make certain that they resemble order of reality discussed under 1(a) and (b). It continually forces the mind back upon nature and life.
- (b) Reason, as a dividing, partitioning faculty, may be relied upon to "disentangle complications and investigate causes," to "divide the object into its parts, or mark the intermediate gradations from the first agent to the last consequence." Its function is directly antithetical to that of the imagination which unites disparate data into new combinations of imagery and which is accompanied by wonder, a "pause of reason, a sudden cessation of the mental progress."
- (c) But the reason is also a concatenating and synthesizing faculty, which establishes order, provides transitions, and properly arranges the disposition of materials—a mental architect which in philosophy constructs systems and in poetry creates plot, form, and structure.
- (d) Reason as a moderating force opposes excess and ecstasy, perceives the ethical and the aesthetic mean, and resists all tendencies to disproportion, lack of symmetry, inappropriateness of language and ornament.

² Citations from Johnson come from the nine-volume edition of his *Works* (Oxford, 1825) and appear in part 1(a) of the schematization in the following order: *Life of Cowley* (*Works*, 7 51), *Rasselas* (1 222), *Rambler* no. 4 (2 18, 19-20). Part 1(b): *Rambler* no. 140 (3 163), *Rambler* no. 156 (3 239-40), *Rambler* no. 92 (1. 220-1), *Life of Pope* (8. 348).

- (e) Reason is an abstracting and generalizing power, of moral importance in detaching the mind from the insistent claims of sense and habit and of aesthetic importance in guiding the writer to select general and therefore more permanent reality. It operates not only as an intuitive and sudden perception of general truth but also as the slower inductive process of generalizing from specific data.³

Because the ideas that appear in the foregoing schematization of the elements in Johnson's rationalism have their roots in the entire intellectual legacy of Western Europe and had passed current in the Republic of Letters for generations, any attempt to determine their specific source would, of course, be futile. They themselves, however, are the very bones and sinews of the Johnsonian system of criticism. And yet, as the remaining sections of this paper will attempt to show, they bear no more resemblance to his total conception of the mind that creates literature than does a skeleton to a man of living flesh.

2

All of the rational processes outlined in the preceding section point to an antecedent operation of the mind—the appropriation of nature and life through the senses and the empirical collection of materials upon which the reason can operate in the functions mentioned above. The mind obviously cannot watch, divide, combine, moderate, or generalize *in vacuo*. “Judgment,” said Johnson in the *Life of Pope*, “is forced upon us by experience.” The reason (no less than the picture-making faculty of the mind, the imagination) depends upon raw material from the world outside, and what Johnson once said about the imagination is equally applicable to the reason. On his tour with Boswell (19 September 1773) he expressed the opinion that the poetry of St. Kilda must be very poor because the locality was barren of images and therefore starved the poet's fancy. To Boswell's objection that even what material

³ For 2(a) see the passages cited under “Truth” in Joseph E. Brown, *The Critical Opinions of Samuel Johnson* (1926), pp. 250-3. For 2(b) see *Rambler* no. 137 (*Works*, 3.147-8). For 2(c) see *Rambler* no. 151 (3.217), *Rambler* no. 158 (3.249-50), *Rambler* no. 139 (3.157-62), *Life of Milton* (7.139), and *Adventurer* no. 95 (4.81). For 2(d) see *Rambler* no. 38 (2.185-6), *Rambler* no. 129 (3.113), *Rambler* no. 122 (3.28), and *The Fountains* (9.181, 183, 190). For 2(e) see *Rambler* no. 208 (3.462) and *Idler* no. 59 (4.324).

there was could be combined into poetry by "a poetical genius," Johnson replied:

"But, sir, a man cannot make fire but in proportion as he has wood. He cannot coin guineas but in proportion as he has gold."

Because Johnson is deeply concerned with the experience of life and the empirical search antecedent to the operations of reason, he cannot be denominated, without important qualification, a rationalist. In the Dictionary he defined a *rationalist* as "one who proceeds in his disquisitions and practice wholly upon reason," and the happy similes from Bacon which he used to illustrate its meaning make it clear that Johnson, like Bacon, was in no way satisfied with an exclusive reliance upon the rational faculty.

He often used this comparison, the empirical philosophers are like to pismires; they only lay up and use their store; the *rationalists* are like to spiders: they spin all out of their bowels: but give me the philosopher, who, like the bee, hath a middle faculty, gathering from abroad, but digesting that which is gathered by his own virtue.

Bacon's little fable of the bee leaves room for the rational faculty, since the mind must, by its own power, digest at home the materials presented to it. But before everything else it must gather from abroad through empirical observation and search.

Johnson not only accepted this Baconian conception of the mind—empirical observation followed by rationalistic "digestion"—as an epistemological truth, but he made it fundamental to his conception of the mental preparation of the poet for his task. One of the most striking facts about Johnson's oft-repeated "character" of the poet is the prominence he gives to the empirical faculty. Although he often recommends, as he does in *Rambler* no. 154, the humanistic labor of possessing the "intellectual treasures which the diligence of former ages has accumulated" and complains that "the mental disease of the present generation is impatience of study, contempt of the masters of ancient wisdom," the noteworthy fact about Johnson is that he reveals impatience with an exclusive reliance upon this somewhat academic and bookish knowledge of the great traditions and insists repeatedly that the mind of the poet be

stocked with fresh, immediate observations of nature and men. Baconian philosophy and Lockean psychology provided him with a new touchstone for determining the excellence of literary imitation: has the poet, like the natural philosopher, collected accurate and extensive data? has he exercised the empirical faculty in gathering from abroad? have the senses stocked the mind with original impressions of nature and reality? As Imlac says, "no kind of knowledge was to be overlooked by the poet"; mountains, deserts, forests, flowers, crags, pinnacles, rivulets, summer clouds, plants, animals, minerals, meteors must all "concur to store his mind with inexhaustible variety." Milton apparently was content with less, for his

images and descriptions of the scenes, or operations of nature, do not seem always copied from original form, nor to have the freshness, raciness, and energy of immediate observation. He saw nature, as Dryden expresses it, 'through the spectacles of books;' and, on most occasions, calls learning to his assistance.

But Shakespeare, on the other hand, "shows plainly that he has seen with his own eyes"; he is "an exact surveyor of the inanimate world; his descriptions have always some peculiarities, gathered by contemplating things as they really exist."

This important empirical strain in Johnson's criticism perhaps results from the fact that for him the principles of evoking literary pleasure did not possess the absoluteness and inflexibility of the moral and ethical principles mentioned earlier. In discussing the metrical harmony of Pope, for example, he denounced "the cant of those who judge by principle rather than by perception"—an almost complete reversal of his position in the realm of morals, where the cant lies in unprincipled reliance upon instinct. The simple but absolute principles of morality apply to art only to the extent that it instructs life. Since the *belles lettres* mix pleasure with instruction and thus introduce a somewhat more lawless element, Johnson approaches them from an entirely different point of view. In his *Preface to Shakespeare* he finds that works of literary pleasure like the drama are "gradual and comparative," "tentative and experimental," and are therefore to be distinguished from those "raised upon principles demonstrative and scientifick." Literature is thus neither morality nor science, and partakes only to a limited extent of the rational certitudes of

these disciplines. But although the literature of pleasure is thus to be distinguished from demonstrative science, the empirical faculty becomes even more necessary than otherwise would be the case, and the appeal to experience takes on a deeper significance. Since works of pleasure appeal "wholly to observation and experience, no other test can be applied than length of duration and continuance of esteem"; their worth is discovered only in a "long succession of endeavours." Earlier, in *Rambler* no. 92, Johnson had said much the same thing about beauty, which he found to be a quality merely "relative and comparative," an epithet which we transfer from one object to another "as our knowledge increases" and as "higher excellence comes within our view."

It is not therefore remarkable that criticism, which attempts the evaluation of so protean a thing as beauty, "has not yet attained the certainty and stability of science." Johnson here (*Rambler* no. 92) holds out some hope that the critic may in time be able to "establish principles; to improve opinion into knowledge." But such principles could be determined on the basis not of universal notions of beauty nor of inner reason but only of continuing observation and experience. He thus praised, as "an example of true criticism," the treatise on the sublime by Edmund Burke, who certainly made it clear that he had sought a knowledge built upon a "more extensive and perfect induction" and had attempted, in his own words, to approach the method of the investigative sciences, a method which even in matters of aesthetics he considered "incomparably the best."⁴

This insistence in the criticism of literature upon the data of the senses and upon first-hand observations of life and nature reflect what is the natural bent of Johnson's mind, which always distrusted abstruse speculation and often demanded arduous and unrelenting search for factual verification. But this persistent empirical strain may also, I think, be properly related to what Johnson said about the nature of reason and the problem of intellectual certainty. It was observed at the outset of this paper that Johnson was impressed with the difficulty of arriving at an exact definition of reason and the mind. In the

⁴ *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke* (New York, 1901), 1 70, 81. For Johnson's praise of Burke's treatise, see Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (Hill-Powell ed.), 2. 90.

preface to Dodsley's *Preceptor* (1748) he recommends first that the student consult books on logic by Crousaz, Watts, Wolfius, Le Clerc, and Locke, but that list is immediately followed by mention of works of "peripatetick logic, which has been, perhaps, condemned without a candid trial." This wavering between two leading schools of logic may have arisen from a fear that it would weaken morality and religion to rely, in all areas, upon induction. But when ethical considerations are not fully pertinent, Johnson reveals that it was with thinkers of the empirical school that he had the closest affinity.

He was a life-long and almost fervent admirer of the logical treatises of Isaac Watts, who says that "the old Aristotelian scheme of this science will teach us very little, that is worth knowing."⁵ The fact that Locke (Watts' mentor and source), Bacon, Boerhaave, and Newton were all intellectual heroes to Johnson and that they all, up to a certain point at least, followed the methods of empirical logic is of some significance in determining Johnson's own concepts. But it is his own comments on the nature of certitude that are the most convincing. *Rambler* no. 41, in which Johnson despairs of determining exactly the meaning of reason and instinct, has already been cited. But after having admitted the semantic difficulty, he then forms a working conception of the terms:

... but surely he that contemplates a ship and a bird's nest, will not be long without finding out, that the idea of the one was impressed at once, and continued through all the progressive descents of the species, without variation or improvement; and that the other is the result of experiments, compared with experiments, has grown, by accumulated observation, from less to greater excellence, and exhibits the collective knowledge of different ages and various professions.

Memory is the purveyor of reason, the power which places those images before the mind upon which the judgment is to be exercised, and which treasures up the determinations that are once passed, as the rules of future actions, or grounds of subsequent conclusions.

It is indeed, the faculty of remembrance, which may be said to place us in the class of moral agents.

This passage is crucial to an understanding of Johnson on the mind. Doubtful of the abstract meaning of the term, he turns

⁵ *Improvement of the Mind* (Boston, 1833), pp. 210-217. For Johnson's praise of Watts, see his *Life of Watts* (*Works*, 8. 385) and also Boswell's *Life*, 4. 311.

with almost obvious relief to nests and ships, to the certitudes of observation and experiment, of collecting data, and of storing the memory. He thus shifts the emphasis from the reason itself to the antecedent operations of the mind without which it would grope uncertainly in the dark. Memory, therefore, rather than the rational faculty itself, becomes here the distinguishing mark of human nature. Apparently Johnson, like Hamlet, finds "god-like reason" most meaningful when it exists with "large discourse looking before and after."

There is another most meaningful passage on intellectual certainty, written in the *Life of Boerhaave* when its author was thirty years of age. It deserves more attention than it has received, for it justifies placing Johnson "among th'asserters of free reason's claim," to use the language of Dryden, and shows comprehension of and admiration for the scientific method.

When he [Boerhaave] laid down his office of governour of the university, in 1715, he made an oration upon the subject of 'attaining to certainty in natural philosophy: ' in which he declares, in the strongest terms, in favour of experimental knowledge; and, reflects, with just severity, upon those arrogant philosophers, who are too easily disgusted with the slow methods of obtaining true notions by frequent experiments; and who, possessed with too high an opinion of their own abilities, rather choose to consult their own imaginations, than inquire into nature, and are better pleased with the charming amusement of forming hypotheses, than the toilsome drudgery of making observations.

The emptiness and uncertainty of all those systems, whether venerable for their antiquity, or agreeable for their novelty, he has evidently shown; and not only declared, but proved, that we are entirely ignorant of the principle of things, and that all the knowledge we have, is of such qualities alone as are discoverable by experience, or such as may be deduced from them by mathematical demonstration.

In *Rambler* no. 137 (1751) Johnson expressed a principle of Locke which has been of crucial importance in all scientific advance and which Bertrand Russell in our own time has made basic to what he has called logical atomism—further evidence that Johnson understood the implications of the scientific revolution of the preceding century.

The chief art of learning, as Locke has observed, is to attempt

but little at a time. The widest excursions of the mind are made by short flights frequently repeated; the most lofty fabricks of science are formed by the continued accumulation of single propositions.

The passages just cited refer primarily to the attainment of scientific truth. What is their relevance to literature? Literature, after the process of selective imitation, guided by ethical insight and devotion to general nature, and after the addition of imaginative elements designed to create pleasure, becomes, as an end-product, something different from a work purely scientific or informative. Nevertheless it was one of Johnson's most important critical emphases that before the process of rational and imaginative digestion takes place the poet must rigorously subject himself to a program of investigative and inductive exploration of reality. The result is that the quest of Johnson's poet (how unlike the Platonic quest of, say, Shelley's *Alastor*!) is a Baconian, Hobbesian, and Lockean quest for sense-data—for impressions of and information about nature and life. Johnson is always pre-occupied with the poet's mental stores and is under no illusion as to the way in which the shelves of the mind are stocked. Mental power, even when possessed by a poet, is the somewhat earth-bound ability to make use of what has already been supplied. Had Shakespeare (as he says in the *Preface*) waited upon the power of nature or the stirrings of inner genius, he had waited in vain, for

the power of nature is only the power of using to any certain purpose the material which diligence procures, or opportunity supplies. Nature gives no man knowledge, and, when images are collected by study and experience, can only assist in combining or applying them. Shakespeare, however favoured by nature, could impart only what he had learned . . .

3

In his best criticism Johnson was profoundly aware that a great work of literary art was an expression of all the powers of the writer—genius, invention, reason, imagination—working together and mutually energizing one another. This perception led him to transcend (without in any way destroying what he felt was the basic constitution of the mind) the rigidly defined categories of neo-classical psychology.

In Boswell's record of the journey to the Hebrides (15 August 1773), there is a passage in which Johnson expresses some important opinions about the mind. After the arrival of Dr. William Robertson the conversation, which then turned to the mental powers of Edmund Burke, became animated. Johnson said

he could not understand how a man could apply to one thing, and not to another. Robertson said one man had more judgment, another more imagination. JOHNSON. 'No, sir; it is only one man has more mind than another. He may direct it differently; he may by accident see the success of one kind of study and take a desire to excel in it. I am persuaded that had Sir Isaac Newton applied to poetry, he would have made a fine epic poem. I could as easily apply to law as to tragic poetry.' BOSWELL. 'Yet, sir, you *did* apply to tragic poetry, not o law, JOHNSON. 'Because, sir, I had not money to study law. Sir, the man who has vigour may walk to the east just as well as to the west, if he happens to turn his head that way.'

In this lively interchange of opinion Johnson denies any special place to literature, removing from it the mystification that has often surrounded it and relating it to the law, to mathematics, and to other co-ordinate disciplines. The assumption is that literature is, like the others, a rigorous mental pursuit. But the prevailing intellectuality is instinct with a kind of dynamism. Excellence depends upon *vigor* of mind—a quality that transcends the conventional distinctions, which Robertson introduced, between the imagination and the judgment. "No, sir; it is only one man has more mind than another."

Among the expected definitions of *vigour* in the Dictionary there occurs one that isolates a purely intellectual quality. Johnson describes it as "mental force, intellectual ability." Such metaphorical language about the mind that achieves excellence he persisted in using again and again. In *Rambler* no. 129 he urges everyone to "endeavour to *invigorate* himself by *reason* and reflection." In *Rambler* no. 145 he describes the impulse of genius as being "*invigorated* with stronger *comprehension*." Addison, who thinks justly but faintly, writes poetry that is the "product of a *mind* too judicious to commit faults, but not sufficiently *vigorous* to attain excellence." Pope's *judgment* often "makes the representation more *powerful* than the reality." Scientific projects are often the product of minds

"heated with intenseness of *thought*." For Johnson methodical deduction possesses "placid beauties"; transitions are lovely; a well-connected plan has "the power of attracting attention"; and generalization possesses grandeur and sublimity. All this points to a conception of reason somewhat different from the neo-classic and Lockean conception of the cold, restraining judgment and even from Rapin's conception of a "*Judgment* proportion'd to the *Wit*" in strength in order to "moderate the heat and govern the natural Fury" of the imagination.⁶ For Johnson the purely intellectual faculty is impelled by heat and power of its own generation—a fact which it is important to notice as an important supplement to the functions of reason outlined in the first section.

Reason was also energized by its co-existence with other powers of the mind and by co-operation with them in literary creation. It had certainly been one tendency of neo-classic criticism to separate the mental faculties, partly in order to understand them more fully and partly in order to give emphasis to the qualities of judgment and good sense that would moderate the excesses to which other faculties were all too prone. But although, as was noted earlier, Johnson often makes these conventional separations, especially when writing with a moral view, his purely aesthetic pronouncements point often to a fusion of the rational and the imaginative. If, as he said in *Rambler* no. 122, "experience soon shows us the tortuosities of imaginary rectitude, the complications of simplicity, and the asperities of smoothness," an attempt to account for the complicated effects of literary pleasure would soon enough show him the impossibility of keeping the imagination and the reason in logic-tight compartments. Johnson might well have exclaimed with Pope: "What thin partitions Sense from Thought divide!" Johnson found it "ridiculous to oppose judgment to imagination; for it does not appear that men have necessarily less of one, as they have more of the other."⁷ The co-existence

⁶ *Reflections on Aristotle's Treatise of Poesie* tr. by Rymer (London, 1694), p. 23. For Locke on judgment, see *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, 1. xi 2. The phrases from Johnson in the two preceding sentences come from *Adventurer* no. 99 (4. 87), *Rambler* no. 158 (3. 249), *Life of Milton* (7. 139), and *Life of Cowley* (7. 38).

⁷ *Life of Roscommon* (7. 169). Irving Babbitt cites this passage in *On Being Creative* (London, 1932) as an "occasional remark of admirable perspicacity"

of these two powers, each of which has its own kind of animation, leads Johnson to forget, in some of his best critical comments, the antitheses between reason and fancy that are elsewhere sharply drawn. His very language is such that one cannot always separate the rational from the imaginative strains. A passage in the *Life of Milton* on the effect of the imagination in that poet illustrates the point. I shall italicize those words and phrases which normally concern the operation of reason but which here comment upon the workings of the poet's imagination.

The *thoughts* which are occasionally called forth in the progress, are such as could only be produced by an imagination in the highest degree fervid and active, to which materials were supplied by incessant *study* and unlimited *curiosity*. The heat of Milton's *mind* may be said to sublimate his learning, to throw off into his work the spirit of *science*, unmingled with its grosser parts.

The same type of fusion takes place between judgment and invention, between judgment and genius. As we have seen, there are passages in Johnson which do, in the more strictly neo-classical manner, separate the concept of invention, wit, natural genius, and imaginative power, on the one hand, from judgment, restraint, and art, on the other hand. But such passages do not represent his central conception of genius or of original invention, which he calls "the highest praise of genius." *Genius* is the inclusive term which refers, in the language of the Dictionary, to all "mental powers or faculties" or to a man "endowed with superior faculties." And Johnson refused to oppose the part to the whole. He ridicules, in *Idler* no. 60, Dick Minim's cant that "a perfect writer is not to be expected, because genius decays as judgment increases." In commenting upon the "chief scene of enchantment" in *Macbeth* (Act IV, sc. 1) he observes the extraordinary use of historical judgment in selecting the ingredients of the witches' unholy brew: "These are the touches of judgment and genius." But it is not only a matter of the necessary and plausible co-existence of the two. As in the case of reason and imagination,

(p. 92), but he finds that usually Johnson tends, "like most neo-classic critics, to set imagination and reason . . . in sharp opposition to one another" (p. 92). In contrast, this paper argues that the fusion of the two is a central Johnsonian insight, present in his best criticism.

there is a kind of mixing of essences. In quoting the conclusion of the *Life of Milton*, a passage on original genius, I shall again italicize those words and phrases that point to the presence of rational elements, which are here woven inseparably into the very fabric of the language itself.

The highest praise of genius is original invention. Milton cannot be said to have *contrived* the *structure* of an epick poem, and, therefore, owes reverence to that *vigour* and amplitude of *mind* to which all generations must be indebted for the art of poetical narration, for the texture of the fable, the variations of incidents, the interposition of dialogue, and all the stratagems that surprise and enchain attention. But, of all the borrowers from Homer, Milton is, perhaps, the least indebted. He was naturally a *thinker* for himself, confident of his own abilities, and disdainful of help or hindrance . . .

Johnson early acquired the habit of introducing into his biographies (like those of Sarpi, Boerhaave, Barretier, Burman, and Sydenham) abstract and summary delineations of the moral and intellectual character of his subject. That habit he carried over into literary biography and criticism, and one finds a succession of "characters" of the poet from Imlac's to those that appear in virtually every one of the *Lives of the Poets*. Such delineations of literary persons and their mental qualities Johnson makes a functional part of his critical evaluations, since in his conception a work of art is a display, or proof, of those qualities. As early as the *Life of Savage* (1744) he found the poet's tragedy of Sir Thomas Overbury "an uncommon *proof* of strength of genius, and evenness of mind, of a serenity not to be ruffled, and an imagination not to be suppressed." He looked for "rays of genius" in all literary production. The point that has been made in this section is that literary excellence is the product of a reason that possesses vigor and power but not of reason, even thus considered, operating alone. The mind stimulated to literary activity is one in which all its powers are heightened and deeply and inextricably interfused.

I have not intended to deny what has always been perceived to be the central truth about Johnson as a critic, that he was a stout champion of the classical and humanistic ideal in letters. But I have found it necessary to point out what has often been ignored or perceived only dimly: that his devotion to general

nature and ethical truth was freshened by a vigorous empiricism and by an imaginative *élan* which freed him from the springes of conventional categories of psychology and rhetoric. He probably never asked himself where fancy is bred, but he doubtless would have placed in the head what others have placed in heart, blood, bowels, and reins. He always cherished the *vivida vis animi*, for to him the mind of a great writer (like Pope, for example) was a mind energized and invigorated—

a mind active, ambitious, and adventurous, always investigating, always aspiring; in its widest searches still longing to go forward, in its highest flights still wishing to be higher, always imagining something greater than it knows, always endeavouring more than it can do.

Such powers of mind it is the aim of literature at its finest to display for the instruction and pleasure of man.

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OF BEAUTY AND REALITY IN KEATS

By RAYMOND D. HAVENS

(The poetry of Keats, from the earliest to the latest, is shot through as by bright and somber threads with two contrasting thoughts: delight in beauty and disappointment with reality. The first of these is so apparent even to the casual reader as to need no illustration, but the second is often overlooked. Yet the two are closely connected, for Keats's disappointment arose from his failure to find in the world of men the beauty that he craved. The fault lay partly in his passionate but immature conception of beauty, which he associated exclusively with youth, "nymphs," flowers, poetry, romance, and the ideal. Partly it lay in the impact of harsh experience on a sensitive, generous, affectionate, unusually-gifted, proud nature.) For life dealt roughly with the Keats children almost from their birth, so that it is not surprising that John failed to see "the very world" as

the place where, in the end,
We find our happiness, or not at all!

(His happiness he found in escaping from that world into the realm of Flora and Old Pan.¹)

Characteristically his first volume opens with the line

Glory and loveliness have passed away

and closes with his first long piece, "Sleep and Poetry," in which a vision of the imagination is succeeded by

A sense of real things [that] comes doubly strong,
And, like a muddy stream, would bear along
My soul to nothingness. (157-9)

At the very beginning of his next volume, *Endymion*, this muddy stream of real things is contrasted with the joy offered by a thing of beauty, and reality is described as "despondence,

¹ See his letter to George and Georgiana Keats of December, 1818-January, 1819 (*Letters* ed. M. B. Forman, 2 ed., London, 1935, pp. 249-50; I give pagination only in case of very long letters): "My Thoughts are very frequently in a foreign Country—I live more out of England than in it."

. . . the inhuman dearth Of noble natures, . . . the gloomy days, . . . [and] all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways Made for our searching" (i. 8-11). A year later, in his "Epistle to Reynolds," he is "sick" at the thought of the "eternal fierce destruction" which prevails in nature, where "the greater on the less feeds evermore."² The same note is sounded in the great odes:

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter . . . ;

"human passion" . . .

leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue;

reality is

The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan; . . .
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow.

The very springs of human happiness are poisoned since even Beauty and Joy, owing to their transitoriness, become Melancholy's "sovrán shrine."³

All reality, the poem "Fancy" asserts, is disappointing:

Every joy is spoilt by use,
Every pleasure, every joy—
Not a Mistress but doth cloy.⁴

This holds true even for nature, in which Keats usually finds perpetual delight:

Summer's joys are spoilt by use,
And the enjoying of the Spring
Fades as does its blossoming;
Autumn's red-lipp'd fruitage too . . .
Cloys with tasting: What do then?

² Lines 82-109. A valuable discussion of this and similar passages will be found in Hoxie N. Fairchild's "Keats and the Struggle-for-Existence Tradition," *PMLA*, LXIV (March, 1949), 98-114.

³ "Ode on a Grecian Urn," 11-12, 28-30; "Ode to a Nightingale," 23-7; "Ode on Melancholy," 11-26.

⁴ These lines are in the poem not as published, but as sent to George and Georgiana Keats in a letter of December, 1818-January, 1819 (*Letters*, 263).

His answer is: Turn from the actual to revel in the delights of nature as imagination presents them. After describing these for fifty-one lines he comes back again to the disappointment presented by reality, asserting that one soon tires of the beauty of any real woman:

Where's the cheek that doth not fade,
Too much gaz'd at? Where's the maid
Whose lip mature is ever new?
Where's the eye, however blue,
Doth not weary? Where's the face
One would meet in every place?
Where's the voice, however soft,
One would hear so very oft?

For this disappointment the cure is that previously offered:

Let, then, winged Fancy find
Thee a mistress to thy mind.⁵

Doubtless this poem is one of Keats's characteristic exaggerations of a passing mood, but his dissatisfaction with reality was expressed too frequently not to be genuine. It is found, for example, in his letters to his brothers and sister-in-law. "Look at the Poles and at the Sands of Africa, Whirlpools and volcanoes," he wrote, "—Let men exterminate them and I will say that they may arrive at earthly Happiness."⁶ And later he declared, "Upon the whole I dislike Mankind."⁷ But here he was thinking of mankind in the abstract or aggregate not of the men he knew. He was an affectionate brother and friend, whose friends were devoted to him; he felt, though in a much milder way, as Swift did: "I hate and detest that animal called man, although I heartily love John, Peter, Thomas, and so forth."⁸ Like Swift also, he was anything but a vague dreamer whose head was lost in the clouds. "Nothing seemed

⁵ In the "Ode to a Nightingale" he complains:

The fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.

⁶ Letter of February 14 to May 3, 1819 (*Letters*, 335). Several other passages in this letter speak disparagingly of human nature. Keats wrote Bailey, June 10, 1818, "Life must be undergone," and to Miss Jeffrey, May 31, 1819: "My Brother George always stood between me and any dealings with the world. Now I find I must buffet it . . . the world has taken on a quakerish look with me."

⁷ To Georgiana Keats, January 18-28, 1820 (*Letters*, 452).

⁸ Swift, letter to Pope of September 29, 1725.

to escape him," Severn noted,⁹ and his letters make clear that he was keenly interested in the every-day world, in what his friends and relatives were doing and thinking, in gossip, fun, politics, food, and drink. Nor were his sensibilities too delicate: he attended boxing matches and even a bear-baiting with pleasure, enjoyed a quarrel in the streets, won victory and a black eye in a fist fight with a butcher's boy, and "was quite capable of relishing a lively, animal pleasantray."¹⁰

(But, despite Keats's interest in the world of men, it was for him an unlovely world of poverty, pain, disease, death, and thwarted desires.¹¹) Accordingly it was not a fit subject for

⁹ William Sharp, *Life and Letters of Joseph Severn*, London, 1892, p. 20; quoted in Amy Lowell's *John Keats*, Boston, 1925, i. 96.

¹⁰ Amy Lowell, *John Keats*, i. 254-8; letter to George and Georgiana Keats of February 14-May 3, 1819 (*Letters*, 317).

¹¹ The letter to Reynolds of May 3, 1818, may imply that the "Misery and Heart-break, Pain, Sickness and oppression," which darken the Chamber of Maiden Thought, will be explained, shown necessary, in some Chamber of Mature Thought. Furthermore, as W. J. Bate points out (*The Stylistic Development of Keats*, New York, 1945, pp. 144-5), Keats wrote his brother and sister-in-law "Do you not see how necessary a World of Pains and troubles is to school an Intelligence and make it a Soul? A Place where the heart must feel and suffer in a thousand diverse ways" (February 14-May 3, 1819; *Letters*, 336); and to Miss Jeffrey that a great reason why English writers are the finest in the world is "They have in general been trampled into the bye paths of life and seen the festerings of Society" (June 9, 1819). But such utterances do not mean that Keats found the world beautiful or what he expected it to be; accordingly, until he has a different idea of beauty or of poetry the miseries of life will not become the theme of his verse. Despite my admiration for Mr Bate's scholarship in this and other studies I am unable to agree with his interpretation of "Lamia," which is concerned with some of the matters treated here. He believes that "Lamia" marks a sudden and complete change in Keats's "entire conception of the nature and purpose of poetry," and that it is "an almost dogmatically moral allegory" of the poet's need to be "continually mindful of the sorrow and pain of his fellow-beings" (142, 146). To me it is vain to look for consistency or logic in the work since Keats's reason was on one side of the question and his emotions on the other. He made clear that Apollonius was a philosopher who wished to save his pupil whereas Lamia was a snake, a deceiver, with powers of very dubious origin whose dwelling was a "purple-lined palace of sweet sin." Yet, despite the moral of his source, he spoke scornfully of the philosopher (ii. 227-9), and, led perhaps by his yearning for Fanny Brawne, treated the love affair with sympathy and delight (i. 185, 229, 396-7, ii. 147-8), and lamented its unhappy end (ii. 238). The lines:

Now, when the wine has done its rosy deed,
And every soul from human trammels freed (ii. 209-10)

do not suggest a moral allegory nor does the comment at the climax of the poem that "cold philosophy" (that is, learning or science) had dulled the rainbow and would take the beauty, the wonder, and the mystery out of the world. Of these decisive matters Mr. Bate says nothing, but he remarks that Lycius "is precisely the sort of poet so bitterly condemned in the revised *Fall of Hyperion*." Now

poetry, since to him poetry meant beauty and, as we have seen, his conception of beauty was narrow and immature. The belief, which has considerable currency today, that vital literature deals with the inhibited, the mal-adjusted and frustrated, the ignorant, the futile, and the vicious, with the dreary lives of petty if not contemptible persons, he would not have understood. He turned repeatedly to ancient Greece where life had the serene, ideal beauty and the eternal youth of the figures in the Elgin marbles. He delighted to write of gods and goddesses, for

Real are the dreams of Gods, and smoothly pass
Their pleasures in a long immortal dream.¹²

But even when his stories are not Grecian they are laid in remote lands and distant times. Love and its consequences are the only problem, and the only pain. Of action there is little; of the joy of accomplishment nothing. Such was certainly not the world known to Keats and his two brothers; indeed he once confessed that "the very thing in which consists poetry" is that "though erroneous . . . [it] may be fine."¹³

(Yet towards the end there is a change. In the ode "To Autumn," for example, one of his latest and most perfect pieces, he turns to the familiar English countryside, the unidealized beauty which nearly every one sees and feels: apples, moss'd cottage-trees, gourds, hazel-nuts, the granary floor, the gleaner with a sheaf on his head, the cyder-press, stubble-plains, gnats, hedge-cricket, robins, and twittering swallows. "The simple flowers of our spring," he wrote when his health was failing, "are what I want to see again."¹⁴)

(A more notable change is to be found in *Hyperion*, although it was written some eight or nine months before the ode "To Autumn." I do not refer to the important lines in *The Fall of Hyperion* which distinguish the poet from the dreamer and

Lycius is a charioteer and a student of philosophy, not a poet, and therefore does not have the responsibilities of that high office. His weakness is not that he is "of the dreamer tribe" condemned by Moneta but that he is unable to moderate his amorousness.

¹² "Lamia," i. 127-8.

¹³ Letter to George and Georgiana Keats of February 4-May 3, 1819 (*Letters*, 317).

¹⁴ Letter to James Rice of February 14, 1820.

declare that for the true poet "the miseries of the world Are misery . . . [which he] will not let . . . rest" (i. 148-9). For while these lines imply that poetry cannot ignore the agony of the world they say nothing about beauty and nothing pleasant about reality. Yet these things almost certainly would have been said if *The Fall of Hyperion* had not been laid aside before the narrative reached the assembly of the Titans. (In *Hyperion* the story is carried further and presents a conception of beauty that for Keats is new, in that it includes reality. This comes in Oceanus' address to the fallen Titans, a passage that appears to contain the key to the meaning of the poem.) After tracing briefly the development of the universe, Oceanus pauses to emphasize his message with these lines:

Now comes the pain of truth, to whom 'tis pain;
O folly! for to bear all naked truths,
And to envisage circumstance, all calm,
That is the top of sovereignty. (ii. 202-5)

Is not this another way of saying that the calm acceptance of reality is the supreme wisdom? Oceanus then affirms that the development he has traced is the working out of

the eternal law
That first in beauty should be first in might. (ii. 228-9)

"As Heaven and Earth," he explains, "are fairer . . . Than Chaos and blank Darkness" which they displaced, so the Titans surpass their predecessors, Heaven and Earth. But he is not content with merely saying that he and his fellows

show beyond that Heaven and Earth
In form and shape compact and beautiful;

he wants to make clear that he means something more than form, shape, and color, more than sensuous attractiveness, for he adds:

In will, in action free, companionship,
And thousand other signs of purer life;
So on our heels a fresh perfection treads. (ii. 206-12)

It may be that kindness and tact keep him from saying frankly to his peers that they have lost their empire through their own shortcomings: through the "fear, hope, and wrath;

Actions of rage and passion " which, to Coelus, makes them
 " most unlike Gods," and through

the frailty of grief,
 Of rage, of fear, anxiety, revenge,
 Remorse, spleen, hope, but most of all despair,

which Saturn displays.¹⁵ It is these weaknesses together with the futile rage of Creus, Iäpetus, and Cottus, and the doubt, wavering, and despondency of Hyperion that constitute the lack of " beauty " in the Titans. As for physical attractiveness, the elder deities have already been so richly endowed with this that it is hard to see how the younger could have been made to surpass them; and surely the overthrow of Saturn and his followers could not have been pictured as achieved by the richer esthetic endowment of their successors. Yet the unwritten books of the poem might well have shown how the younger Gods obtain mastery by a nobility and a wisdom which give them beauty of a higher kind.

(It would seem, then, that Keats had come to think of beauty, and for the first time to depict it in his poetry, not merely as sensuous and physical but as including moral and intellectual excellence.) The account of how Apollo, the only one of the new deities whom we see, becomes a God strengthens this belief. Clymene's description of the music he produces together with the picture given of him and of " the immortal fairness of his limbs " in Book III leaves no doubt as to his great physical attractiveness.¹⁶ But he is not yet a God and even his beauty appears to be of a more sensuous, less noble kind than that of Hyperion, whom he displaces. Furthermore a melancholy numbs his limbs; he feels curs'd, thwarted, and in aching ignorance¹⁷ until suddenly he cries:

¹⁵ *Hyperion*, i. 323-33, ii. 93-5 Douglas Bush has pointed this out in his *Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry* (Cambridge, Mass., 1937, pp. 124-5), a work notable for insight, breadth, and learning. I am glad to find myself also in agreement with Professor Bush's interpretation of " *Lamia*."

¹⁶ See iii. 79, 81, 122-32; besides, the passage which first speaks of him (iii. 10-28) and the setting in which he is placed (iii. 31-8) surround him with an aura of beauty.

¹⁷ This recalls Keats's description of the state of mind of a person in the latter part of his stay in the Chamber of Maiden Thought (Letter to Reynolds of May 3, 1818).

Knowledge enormous makes a God of me.
 Names, deeds, gray legends, dire events, rebellions,
 Majesties, sovran voices, agonies,
 Creations and destroyings, all at once
 Pour into the wide hollows of my brain,
 And deify me. (iii. 113-18)

May it not then be that Apollo becomes a God and surpasses Hyperion and the other Titans in "beauty" by rising through suffering, through knowledge, through "bear[ing] all naked truths" (which is "the top of sovereignty") from an attractiveness that is purely esthetic to one that is intellectual and ethical? Moneta's words in *The Fall of Hyperion*, although they do not mention beauty, accord with this view:

None can usurp this height . . .
 But those to whom the miseries of the world
 Are misery, and will not let them rest. (i. 147-9)

It is of poets that Moneta is speaking and Apollo is the God of poetry

The Johns Hopkins University

HENRY ADAMS: PESSIMISM AND THE INTELLIGENT USE OF DOOM

By GERRIT H. ROELOFS

1

The Education of Henry Adams is not an easy book. It was not designed to be easy. It was calculated to baffle and to tantalize the reader, to arouse curiosity, and so to irritate apathy into action. Adams was interested primarily in the response of the reader to his books, in exciting intellectual and (at least in *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*) emotional activity in his reader. True to his pose, as usual, Adams considered the *Education* a "failure." And to a certain extent, he was right because the critics, until quite recently, seem to have been taken in, deceived, by Adams' self-admitted failure. Robert Morss Lovett calls the *Education* the "Betrayal of Henry Adams." Lovett is sentimentally attracted by the "failure," the tragedy of it all.

There is something pathetic in the wistful attitude of Henry Adams, standing always a little aloof from the world, puzzled and disconcerted. There is something tragic in his halting progress as he limps along, consciously behind and striving to catch up. No man was ever more keenly aware of failure than Henry Adams, and no man ever confessed it more conscientiously. No one has ever tried more scrupulously to fathom the secret cause of sterility.¹

Carl Becker is more specific: Henry Adams was defeated in everything he attempted to do.

The *Education* is in fact the record, tragic and pathetic underneath its genial irony, of the defeat of fine aspirations and laudable ambitions. It is the story of a life which the man himself, in his old age, looked back upon as a broken arch.²

Oscar Cargill labels Adams a "Freudian" and alternates between sneering at him for being a "dilettante"—his "fliers"

¹ Robert Morss Lovett, "The Betrayal of Henry Adams," *Dial*, LXV (1918), 468.

² Carl Becker, "The Education of Henry Adams," *The American Historical Review*, XXIV (1918-19), 425

in journalism had failed—and praising him (with a sneer) for dying “as close to the fold of the Catholic Church as pride would let him go.”³ James Truslow Adams condescends to give Adams the advice that, considering the antecedents of the Adams family, he was bound to be a frustrated failure.

Apparently it never occurred to Adams that literature divorced from activity in other lines is extremely apt to bring about the feeling of frustration. In his own case, with background and inheritance of a public wielding of power through the State, almost any competent adviser, even quite devoid of modern psychology, could have warned him that it would almost inevitably do so for him.⁴

Max I. Baym departs from the usual attitude towards Adams and calls his failure a “pen and paper failure.” Mr. Baym’s argument in defense of his thesis is curious. He tries to make the stubborn granite of Quincy absorb the pigment of the romantic “heroic failure.”

Henry Adams recapitulated on American soil the romantic tradition of Europe. The tradition included aesthetic pessimism, in which framework he built up a personality-image which he came to enjoy artistically. The image was that of the failure, the heroic failure. He came to enjoy the spectacle doubly: on the stage as an actor, from the wings as an onlooker who revels in the gaping audience.⁵

Yvor Winters anatomizes Adams with studied thoroughness and abhors what he finds. He professes to trace the “radical disintegration of a mind” in the later works (*The Education, Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*, etc.) by showing that Adams deliberately created confusion, primarily to amuse himself. With reference to Adams’ avowed “confusion” in geology, Winters writes,

His procedure is to be witty rather than intelligent, and having established a state of confusion for the sake of wit, to deduce his spiritual suffering from it: that is the literary process; the original psychological process is less simple.⁶

And again,

³ Oscar Cargill, *Intellectual America* (New York, 1941), p. 569

⁴ James Truslow Adams, *Henry Adams* (New York, 1933), p. 33.

⁵ Max I. Baym, “Henry Adams and his Critics,” *The American Scholar*, XV (1945-46), 87.

⁶ Yvor Winters, *The Anatomy of Nonsense* (Norfolk, 1943), p. 50.

Adams, in brief, did not care for truth unless it was amusing, for he was a modern nihilist, and hence a hedonist or nothing.⁷

It is perhaps safe to infer that Mr. Winters would argue that Adams called himself a failure just to create confusion and, moreover, that he really *was* a failure because he really *did* create confusion.

Only R. P. Blackmur is not deceived by the theme of personal failure. Rather, for him, Adams' failure is "the expense of greatness."

Failure is the appropriate end to the type of mind which Adams is the pre-eminent example: the type which attempts through imagination to find the meaning or source of unity aside from the experience which it unites . . . Adams, by attempting to justify experience and so to pass beyond it had like Milton and Dante to push his mind to the limit of reason and his feeling to the limit of faith. Failure, far from incidental, is integral to that attempt, and becomes apparent just so soon as reason falters and becomes abstract, or faith fails and pretends to be absolute . . . His scrupulous sophistication made him aware of his own failure; and this awareness is the great drive of his work.⁸

This *genuine* failure, Blackmur points out, has purpose, is not exhausted and useless:

For Adams, as for everyone, the principle of unity carried to failure showed the most value by the way, and the value was worth the expense.⁹

Thus, with the exception of Blackmur, the critics have called Henry Adams a "wistful," "pathetic," "tragic" failure; a "defeated" failure; a "frustrated" failure; a poser of the romantic "heroic" failure; and the creator of confusion and hence, a moral failure. For this constant attention to the aspect of failure, Adams is partly to blame. He regularly refers to himself as a failure, as a man who had failed. But he also refers to society as having failed; and he says that Clarence King, the man who had a superb, scientifically coordinated education, failed pitifully. If Adams says specifically that his society and its most gifted man have failed along with himself, then the

⁷ *Ibid.*, p 51.

⁸ R. P. Blackmur, *The Expense of Greatness*, pp. 273-4.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 276.

critic might reasonably suppose that Adams had more than autobiographical motives for dwelling constantly on the theme of personal failure.

Belief in the fact of Adams' personal failure is based essentially on two assumptions; (1) that the *Education* is a valid autobiography, and (2) that Adams' prime concern is with the fact of his failure, not with the reasons for or nature of that failure. Neither assumption is particularly true. Furthermore, if we concern ourselves with the minim of truth in these assumptions, we will fall victim to what Aristotle calls "the weak-minded tendency of the audience to listen to what is beside the point." Henry Adams was concerned with himself only accidentally as a particular individual. He wrote about the self which he knew best, the New England representative of western civilization who, as a type, reflected the aspirations and defeats, the strength and weakness, the motion and direction of the normal citizen of the multiverse. And if we are concerned with Adams' pessimism, we shall be travelling the safest path if we ignore *autobiography*, *ego*, and *failure* as far as Henry Adams the individual is concerned. In the following section I shall attempt to demonstrate that the *Education* is not autobiography, that the theme of personal failure is biographically irrelevant, and that, moreover, the theme exists primarily as a literary device. In so doing, I hope to approach directly the problem of the meaning of the *Education*.

2

Most readers of the *Education* tacitly assume that it is an autobiography. Their assumption is justifiable since the title page of the first public edition, bearing the copyright of the Massachusetts Historical Society, reads "The Education of Henry Adams / An Autobiography." Yet at the end of chapter XXIX, Adams labels his book "The Education of Henry Adams: a Study of Twentieth-Century Multiplicity." The latter subtitle, Harold Dean Carter asserts, is the correct one; the former is the result of the dereliction of editorial duty of Henry Cabot Lodge who supervised the first publication of the *Education* by the Massachusetts Historical Society in 1918.¹⁰ On 1 March 1915, Adams wrote thus to Lodge:

¹⁰ Harold Dean Carter, *Henry Adams and his Friends* (Boston, 1947), p. xci.

I send you herewith a sealed packet containing a copy of my *Education* corrected and prepared for publication. Should the question arise at any future time, I wish that you, on behalf of the Historical Society, would take charge of the matter and see that the volume is printed as I leave it.

With this view, I have written a so-called Editor's Preface, which you have read, and which I have taken the liberty, subject to your assent, to stamp with your initials.

Also, may I beg that you will bar the introduction of all illustrations of any sort. You know that I do not consider illustrations as my work, or having part in any correct rendering of my ideas. Least of all do I wish portraits. I have always tried to follow the rule of making the reader *think only of the text*, and I do not wish to abandon it here . . .¹¹

In a conversation with Lodge, Adams is also reported to have said, "You may omit anything in it that you think best, but you are not to add anything."¹² For the reader, Lodge's editorial sin results in directing a change of emphasis from the study of a twentieth-century phenomenon (in which Adams as a particular individual is primarily accidental) to that of Henry Adams as the particular object of study, the study of a failure. This change of emphasis is unfortunate, to say the very least.

However, since Adams does write about himself, the sceptic may wonder if the subtitle "A Study of Twentieth-Century Multiplicity" is a blind to conceal the autobiographical intent of the author. But is the *Education* autobiographical in fact, stating with some detail and accuracy the facts, both public and private, of his life, in order to give insight into and understanding of the writer? Upon reflection, we realize that the book is blocked out into periods—Quincy and Harvard (the period of his formal education), Berlin and Rome (the "grand tour"), Washington and London (the student of politics), Washington (the reformer and journalist), and Harvard (professor and editor). These periods, connected by the scantiest

(Hereafter, this volume will be referred to as *Letters III*) Carter writes: "However he [Lodge] did take one liberty; he allowed the words 'An Autobiography' to be printed under Adams' original, self-descriptive title. Adams' privately printed edition carried this title: *The Education of Henry Adams, A Study of Twentieth-Century Multiplicity*, which has an altogether different implication." (*Ibid.*, p. xci.)

¹¹ *Letters III*, pp. 769-70. The italics are mine.

¹² *Letters III*, p. xc. The above conversation and letter should make clear, at least, that Adams wished to eliminate the visual image of himself as the object of study and attention in the *Education*.

of narrative, are concerned not so much with what Adams did, but with his attempt to understand what was happening and why. Then there is a twenty-year gap between 1871 and 1892 during which he married and lost his beloved wife,¹³ wrote his monumental *History of the United States*, and traveled to the Far East and Japan. Between 1892 and 1905 there is very little personal narrative of events, movements, and accomplishment. Adams writes only of what he is thinking and trying to find out; when he writes of John Hay, or Senator Don Cameron, he analyzes them as types and uses them as individuals only to support the narrative. If we could trust that Adams' narrative is accurate, then the *Education* could be legitimately recognized as a limited type of autobiography, on the order, perhaps, of the *Autobiography of John Stuart Mill*. But the narrative is suspect, not only in interpretation, but also in fact. For example, Adams greatly depreciates the influence of Harvard.

Beyond two or three Greek plays, the student got nothing from the ancient languages. Beyond some incoherent theories of free trade and protection, he got little from Political Economy. He could not afterwards remember to have heard the name of Karl Marx mentioned, or the title of "Capital." He was equally ignorant of Auguste Comte. These were two writers of his time who most influenced its thought.¹⁴

In the latest biography of Henry Adams,¹⁵ Ernest Samuels makes a point by point refutation of Adams' complaint. Adams was well read in Latin and Greek literature; he was sufficiently competent in Latin to be able to recite in German from Latin

¹³ Certainly Adams was devoted to his wife. In a letter to Godkin after her death by suicide, he wrote, "I admit that fate at last has smashed the life out of me; but for twelve years I had everything I most wanted on earth. I own that the torture has made me groan; but, as long as any will is left, I shall try not to complain" (*Letters III*, p. 158). For the rest of his life Adams did not complain. Because he did not, we should make every effort to disavow any causal connection between Adams' pessimism and his personal tragedy and genuine grief. No scholarly method can ascertain the connection and influence. If we *must* establish a physical cause for Adams' pessimism, we can console ourselves by remembering that Adams was a victim of chronic dyspepsia. Browning had a marvelous digestion. He was, they say, an optimist.

¹⁴ Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (Boston, 1918), p. 60. Hereafter referred to as *Education*.

¹⁵ Ernest Samuels, *The Young Henry Adams* (Cambridge, 1948). Ch. I.

texts when he was studying German in the Gymnasium in Berlin. He hung on to his classical readings in later life, as his specific references to Roman authors show in his marginal notes to Brooks Adams' *The Law of Civilization and Decay*.¹⁶ By examining the books used in the courses which Adams attended as an undergraduate at Harvard, Mr. Samuels has been able to demonstrate that Harvard was neither a "negative" nor impotent force in Adams' intellectual career. In Professor Torrey's course Adams read Guizot's *History of the Origin of Representative Government in Europe*. Mr. Samuels comments,

Guizot's great generalizations were of a sort to delight the philosophical statesmen of the Adams school. He analyzed the rise of representative government not as a series of isolated phenomena, but as part of a great organic and progressive movement, a movement demonstrating that "unity and consecutiveness are not lacking in the moral world, as they are not in the physical." Later Adams would encounter other writers, Buckle for instance, who also sought for "a bond which may unite and harmonize" the great mass of seemingly unrelated facts of human experience and give them meaning and direction.¹⁷

Adams was to concern himself with these principles for the rest of his life. In the course in chemistry, theories of which "befogged his mind for a life time," and that in physics, Adams read texts the authors of which relied largely upon experimental method, not on authority, and confessed that they could not explain ultimate causes. All his life long Adams was constantly attempting to apply these scientific principles and methods in his particular field, history. Most of his distinct periods of activity in a particular direction Adams regarded as experiments. His *History of the United States* was an experiment (which failed, of course). As for Marx and Comte, *Das Kapital* was not published until 1867, nine years after Adams was graduated from Harvard, and Professor Bowen had denounced Comte in the *North American Review* (1854) and in a long footnote to his text *Metaphysics and Ethics* which Adams certainly read.¹⁸ Not only are Henry Adams' facts concerning

¹⁶ Cf. R. P. Blackmur, "Henry and Brooks Adams: Parallels to two Generations," *The Southern Review*, V (1939-40), 310.

¹⁷ Samuels, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-9.

¹⁸ Cf. Samuels, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

his education at Harvard misleading, if not erroneous, but so also is his interpretation of the value of his education. This is not the only instance where Adams deceives those readers of the *Education* who consider it an authentic autobiography. In reviewing his career as a reformer and a Washington correspondent, he gives his reader the impression that if he was not perhaps something of an indolent dilettante, he was at least a bewildered young man, helpless in the chaos of postbellum Washington, ineffective in his journalistic activities, and one who gained for himself the reputation of being a lightweight and a begonia to boot. All in all, he claims for himself only a "modest success." Biographers think otherwise. In two years of energetic and exciting activity as an independent journalist¹⁹ he had acquired with his second annual "Session" article a noteworthy reputation of being the "ranking censor of Congress" and gained the confidence and praise of such men as Sir Charles Lyell and the historians Deane and Palfrey. Mr. Samuels' summation of the public reputation of Henry Adams in 1870 just prior to his departure for Harvard is decidedly different from the impression Adams gives his reader.

To the readers of the *Nation* and the members of the reform associations of Boston and New York there could be no doubt of his "taste, his energy, and his personal power." As the right-hand man of David A. Wells he had attained national reputation as one of the bravest publicists of the reform movement.²⁰

Thus if Adams gives his reader a decidedly limited view of his life and deliberately misleads him in the interpretation of the legitimate biographical facts, then we are led to the conclusion that the *Education* is incidentally, not intentionally, an autobiography. And the bibliographical evidence tends to support this interpretation.

Finally, to counter such critics as Max Baym who like to think of Adams as reveling in the personality-image of the "heroic failure"—that is, writing only to express the long

¹⁹ C. I. Glicksburg (*NEQ*, XXI (1948), 232-6) has demonstrated that Adams was certainly the author of more articles than those which he acknowledged in the *Nation* and the *North American Review*. "Even though the articles he contributed have not yet been identified, Henry Adams was writing steadily for the newspapers at this time" (p. 232). Mr. Glicksburg comments also that Adams showed that he could be a "bold and effective muckraker."

²⁰ Samuels, *The Young Henry Adams*, p. 206

suppressed ego—Adams' own words ought to be sufficient. In his conclusion to his exhaustive study of the administration of Jefferson and Madison, he writes that, from the perspective of history, individuals were important chiefly as types.

American types were especially worth study if they were to represent the greatest democratic evolution the world could know. Readers might judge for themselves what share the individual possessed in creating or shaping the nation; but whether it was small or great, the nation could be understood by studying the individual. For that reason, in the story of Jefferson and Madison, individuals retain their old interests as types of character, if not as sources of power.²¹

And in the study of "twentieth-century multiplicity," Adams is an individual only in so far as he is a type which could help to represent the national character evolving in history. He also considers himself a type which could be used as a "model," a point of reference for those who were seeking to educate themselves. In his preface he writes,

As educator, Jean Jacques was, in one respect, easily first; he erected a monument of warning against the Ego. Since his time, and largely thanks to him, the Ego has steadily tended to efface itself, and, for purposes of model, to become a manikin on which the toilet of education is to be draped in order to show the fit or misfit of the clothes. The object of study is the garment, not the figure. . . .

The manikin . . . has the same value as any other geometrical figure of three or more dimensions, which is used for the study of relation. For that purpose it cannot be spared; it is the only measure of motion, of proportion of human condition; it must have the air of reality; it must be taken for real; must be treated as though it had life.²²

There is nothing in the *Education* or in the available letters, I believe, to encourage us to disbelieve these words, or to make us seek out a consciously contrived *double entendre*. There is a tinge of mocking irony in the preface, but irony is not sufficient to demonstrate that Adams was deliberately (or subconsciously) trying to express his ego for the sake only of giving the ego expression in the so-called "romantic" tradition. Thus we may safely assume that the *Education* is exactly what Henry Adams called it: "A Study of Twentieth-Century

²¹ Henry Adams, *History of the United States* (New York, 1891), IX, 226.

²² *Education*, pp. ix-x.

Multiplicity," incidentally an autobiography, in which the Henry Adams of the book is a type of character, a fictitious person, a manikin which *perhaps* had reality.

Now if the *Education* is assumed not to be an autobiography, then Adams as a personal failure is of little consequence, one way or the other. The theme, as far as Adams the individual is concerned, is irrelevant. If he portrays himself as a type of failure, not autobiographically, then he must have some special motive for so doing. To understand Adams' intent in writing, we must have it firmly established in our minds that *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* (1904), *The Education of Henry Adams* (1907), and the two essays, "The Rule of Phase Applied to History" (1909) and "A Letter to American Teachers of History" (1910)—both published together by Brooks Adams under Brooks' lugubrious title *The Degradation of the Democratic Dogma* (1919)—constitute three terms of a series. No one term can be completely understood without considering the other two. Adams' intent in writing this series is three-fold, scientific, didactic, and literary.

(1) As a scientific historian who was eager to discover the laws of history, who assumed that thought was one continuous force, and who postulated from the experience and contributions of previous historians that "if history ever meant to correct the errors she made in detail, she must agree on a scale for a whole," Adams set up a system by which he could measure the force of man from one pole—the idea of the universe—to its contrary extreme—the idea of the multiverse. He states this explicitly in the *Education*:

Any schoolboy could see that man as a force must be measured by motion, from a fixed point. Psychology helped here by suggesting a unit—the point of history when man held the highest idea of himself as a unit in a unified universe. Eight or ten years of study had led Adams to think that he might use the century 1150-1250 expressed in Amiens Cathedral and the Works of Thomas Aquinas, as the unit from which he might measure motion down to his own time, without assuming anything as true or untrue, except relation. The movement might be studied at once in philosophy and mechanics. Setting himself to the task, he began a volume which he mentally knew as "Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres: A study of Thirteenth-Century Unity." From that point he proposed to fix a position for himself, which he could label: "The Education of Henry Adams: A Study of Twentieth-Century Multiplicity."

With the help of these two points of relation, he hoped to project his lines forward and backward indefinitely, subject to correction from anyone who should know better.²³

Having once set up his system in his "laboratory of history," so to speak, Adams was provided with an ample time-sequence, experimental data, and unique points of reference with which he could formulate, tentatively, his laws of history. With these laws he could try to explain the "why" problem of history—why history had evolved in the way it had, why the Roman civilization collapsed—; he could understand more clearly what was happening in his own time and why; and he could "triangulate" into the future and attempt to predict the nature of events in the coming fifty years. It is noteworthy that, as his letters show, he spent a good deal of his remaining years in attempting to verify his theories by checking his predictions against current events.

²³ Adams, *Education*, pp 434-5 Robert Spiller makes the following comment on this passage. After the tenth reading, the student "will not make the mistake that many critics have committed of assuming a finality in Adams' logical position; he will know that the two books in concept are one, a planned work of the imagination rather than historical, autobiographical, or scientific record or argument; he will evaluate their timeless quality rather than their circumstantial reference" (*Literary History of the United States* (New York, 1948), II, 1099-1100. Hereafter referred to as *LHUS*.). I do not see why these books should not be interpreted for their logical, historical, scientific argument when such an interpretation is pertinent. It took scholarly and literary imagination to execute these books, but I see no evidence for assuming (except, perhaps, for some passages in *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*) an imaginative and artistic end as the primary and important end of these works. Nor has Dr. Spiller advanced any direct evidence to substantiate his implied thesis that Adams was in the process of perfecting a "new sort of epic or symbolic form" Adams is not guilty of logical finality because his historical theories were largely tentative and speculative, based for the most part on assumptions and laws of physics. Because he was neither a physicist nor a mathematician, he was not sure that his interpretations of science were correct, and hence did not rigorously press his conclusions against intelligent opposition. The validity of the scientific interpretation of these books, where they are intended to be so understood, tends to be substantiated by the following letters To Ralph Pumpelly, Adams wrote in 1910, "The only book I ever wrote that was worth writing was the first volume of the series—the *Mont-Saint-Michel*. The Volume began the demonstration of the law which the *Letter* announces, and the *Education* illustrates" (*Letters of Henry Adams 1892-1918*, Worthington Chauncey Ford ed. (New York, 1938), p. 542. Hereafter referred to as *Letters II*.). In 1908 Adams wrote to Whitelaw Reid, "The volume on Chartres is involved in the same doubt, for both go together, the last three chapters of the *Education* being Q.E.D. of the last three chapters of *Chartres*" (*Letters III*, p. 623). I see no reason for doubting an author's word or intent when it is clear that he is writing in a straight-forward fashion.

(2) Adams' didactic intent is equally clear. Using himself as a manikin on which the garment of education is to be draped, he endeavors to show the inadequacies of modern education and the erroneous nature of the assumptions on which it is based.

This is a story of education, not of adventure! It is meant to help young men—or such as have intelligence enough to seek help—but it is not meant to amuse them. . . . Most keen judges incline to think that barely one man in a hundred owns a mind capable of reacting to any purpose on the forces that surround him, and fully half of these react wrongly. The object of education for that mind should be the teaching itself how to react with vigor and economy. No doubt the world at large will always lag so far behind the active mind as to make a soft cushion of inertia to drop upon, as it did for Henry Adams; but education should try to lessen the obstacles, diminish the friction, invigorate the energy, and should train minds to react, not at haphazard, but by choice, on the lines of force that attract their world. What one knows is, in youth, of little moment; they know enough who know how to learn. Throughout human history the waste of mind has been appalling, and as this story is meant to show, society has conspired to promote it. No doubt the teacher is the worst criminal, but the world stands behind and drags the student from his course. The moral is sten-torian. Only the most energetic, the most highly fitted, and the most favored have overcome the friction of the viscosity of inertia, and those were compelled to waste three-fourths of their energy in doing it.²⁴

To react with purpose, choice, and economy on surrounding forces, the student must realize the growing helplessness of the mind of man before the forces of nature released by science. This was not a new theme with Adams. As Professor Spiller notes, "The central theme of his history [of the United States] is the incapacity of the individual to control his own destiny and to shape the course of events outside himself."²⁵ These assump-

²⁴ *Education*, p. 314. If there are those who consider Henry Adams too enlightened to be didactic, the following extract from a letter to John Franklin Jameson in 1909 should be sufficient to quell their doubts: "You shall have the *Education*, of which the new paper [presumably "the Rule of Phase"] is only a supplementary chapter, too didactic to make part of a narrative. My object was to suggest a reform of the whole University system, grouping all knowledge as a historical stream, to be treated by historical methods, and drawing a line between University and technology. The form of presenting all this, from the 12th century till today (in the *Chartres*, the *Education*, and the supplementary chapter, was invented to make it literary and not technical" (*Letters III*, pp. 649-50).

²⁵ *LHUS*, II, 1087.

tions directly contradicted those which underlay the formal education of Adams and the political and philosophical activity of his contemporaries. Adams, like most of us today, was brought up on eighteenth century moral and political principles (embodied in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States) which were considered to be absolute, since derived from immutable theological and cosmological principles of order and harmony. Man was free to act in whatever way he chose within this all-embracing order. But if the twentieth-century student based his whole education and endeavors on these principles, and failed to realize that most men were helpless in the grip of the forces and process of evolving nature; that chaos, not order, was the fact; that unity was only a working hypothesis, a mere convenience; that force (nature) not intellect was ultimate; that we live in an exploding universe, not a comfortable orderly, permanent one; that the democratic ideals of the Declaration and the Constitution no longer retained their original validity and workableness; then only catastrophe could be expected, and that immediately. Adams wrote with didactic intent to warn the student who had the wit to seek help and the desire to learn to free himself from the intellectual inertia of the universities and the intellectual traditions so long regarded as final, ultimate, and immutable; to accept the new multiverse; and to realize his minute part in it so that he could use with economy, choice, and purpose his little and dwindling energy. Destruction was the only alternative. Adams wrote his "Letter to American Teachers of History" to ask them "what they were going to do about Socialism [i. e., collectivism]." ²⁸ To Charles Milnes Gaskell, Adams wrote in 1910,

When I flung my little volume ["A Letter to American Teachers of History"] in professorial faces last winter, and—so to speak—kicked my American Universities in the stomach as violently and insultingly as I could, I calculated on getting one sharp reaction and protest for every hundred copies of the *Letter* I sent out. . . . Every correspondent has taken the tone,—'Why, of course! We know, etc., etc.' My poor dear old friend and fellow William James alone has put up some sort of fight. Society is ready for collec-

²⁸ *Letters III*, p. xcvi. In a conversation, reported by Dr. Waldo G. Leland, in 1911.

tivism; it has no fight left in it; and our class is as defunct as the dodo. We are just jelly fish, and flabby all through.²⁷

And collectivism, as well as the capitalism of the "gold bugs," was, to Adams, akin to catastrophe.

(3) The formal literary problem which faced Henry Adams was twofold. He had a subject which was technical in substance and didactic in motive. The discovery of a form, and the balancing of scientific, didactic, and literary material presented a problem which was difficult. Also, Adams was faced by what he called the "conspiracy of silence" on the part of his American audience. He considered his audience, on the whole, to be dull, apathetic, indifferent to or ignorant of variety, exhibiting a singular incapacity for genuine aesthetic experience, feeling, and critical analysis. In a long letter to Barrett Wendell in 1909, one of his old students at Harvard, Adams sums up his literary problems and intentions.

I am amused to find myself at last in a little atmosphere of criticism. . . . I am glad of it, because we are smothered in this American vacuum, and gasp for intelligent attack. . . . In fifty years of literary effort, I think I have never met with published criticism that gave me the least help. . . .

My favorite figure of the American author is that of a man who breeds a favorite dog, which he throws into the Mississippi River for the pleasure of making a splash. The river does not splash, but it drowns the dog.

My dispute, or rather my defense against self criticism, is that our failures are really not due to ourselves alone. Society has a great share in it. When I read St. Augustine's *Confessions*, or Rousseau's I feel certain that their faults, as literary artists, are worse than mine. We have all three undertaken to do what cannot be successfully done—mix narrative and didactic purpose and style. The charm of the effort is not in winning the game but in playing it. We all enjoy the failure. . . . I found that a narrative style was so incompatible with a didactic or scientific style, that I had to write a long supplementary chapter to explain in scientific terms what I could not put into narration without ruining the narrative. . . .

My conclusion is that we need far more art than ever to accomplish a much smaller artistic effect. That is to say, we are unduly handicapped. We are forced to write science, because our purpose is scientific, and cannot be rendered by narrative. To us, who

²⁷ *Letters II*, p. 546. This intellectual atrophy, Adams believed, was a com-comitant of historical entropy.

do not propose to instruct, but only to amuse,* and whose own amusement is in the game rather than in the stakes, the highest scientific or didactic success is a failure. To gain it we must throw up our hand. My experiment of trying to find the exact point of equilibrium where the two motives would be held in contact was bound to be a failure, but was very amusing to carry out. . . .

At bottom, the problem is common to us all, which is my excuse for proposing it in the *Education* and in *Mont-Saint-Michel*. The last three chapters of each make one didactic work in disguise.²⁸

Adams' formal literary intention—to "mix narrative and didactic purpose and style"—applies primarily to the *Education*. In *Chartres* his problem was different. For twenty years he had "saturated himself in the great imaginative experiment of the Virgin which had brought the diverse energies of the Light Age to unified purpose."²⁹ He believed in the Virgin, as Blackmur says, "imaginatively." And to transmit his aesthetic experience to his reader, he had, as he himself remarks, to "catch not a fact but a feeling"; because the great value of a monument, such as Chartres, was its expression of an emotion.

Like all great churches, that are not mere storehouses of the clergy, Chartes expressed, besides whatever else it meant, an emotion, the deepest man ever felt—the struggle of his own littleness to grasp the infinite.³⁰

This emotion—this "unsatisfied, incomplete, overstrained effort of man to rival the energy, intelligence, and purpose of God"—is dominant in both *Chartres* and the *Education* (although in the latter book, the emotion is less explicit, and the terms have been translated into their modern scientific equivalents, *i. e.* God and the Virgin of *Chartres* tend to mean Force and Ultimate energy of the *Education*). To express effectively this emotion was the artistic and imaginative end of the two books. And in so doing, Adams hoped to revitalize artistic feeling,

²⁸ *Letters III*, pp. 244-6. * This is Adams' pose of the "gentleman scholar," the man of the world, who wrote only to amuse his close friends and himself in a polite way. It may be that Adams assumed this irritating pose to arouse antagonism in his reader to provoke "intelligent attack," and consequently more vigorous attention to his words. Again, it may be, and probably is, only a snobbish blind.

²⁹ R. P. Blackmur, "Henry Adams: Three Late Moments," *The Kenyon Review*, II (1940), 23.

³⁰ Henry Adams, *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* (Boston and New York, 1933), p. 104. (Hereafter referred to as *Chartres*.)

emotion, and delight in variety in his imaginatively moribund American audience.

Finally, in the effort to discredit the theme of personal failure, we must inquire wherein it is used as a literary device. One of the most typical manifestations of the theme is the apparent inability of Adams to succeed in any endeavor. In one of his early letters, Adams wrote to his brother, Charles Francis Adams, "I have a theory that an educated and reasonably able man can make his mark if he chooses."³¹ Much of the *Education* is devoted to the refutation of this maxim. Society and nature, not the innocent Henry Adams, are responsible for this failure, and the Adams of the narrative is not entrusted with the secret until late in the story. This situation is the classic example of irony. Adams evidently tried to model his literary expression after the manner of Montaigne, the master of ironic wisdom,

of wisdom which by the poetry of its manners suggests another version of itself in the very act of finishing or polishing off its present expression. That is its irony, the riches of its scepticism, that in reconciling two points of view into one it manages to imply the possibility of a third and quite unadjusted point of view.³²

Irony is especially useful when the writer is endeavoring to express in effective literary form scientific material with didactic intent. For irony characteristically annoys the reader into thinking, into considering what the author is attempting to suggest, rather than assists in achieving placid acceptance. Also the method of irony is closely akin to Adams' "antagonistic" devices for arousing the intellectual activity of his students at Harvard. One of his plans was to have two professors of antagonistic views teach the same course simultaneously. It was hoped that the collision of views and methods of the two pedagogues would shock the student into arriving at his own conclusions, primarily through his own efforts. As a reviewer, while editor of the *North American Review*, Adams was noted for being violently unconventional and for a tendency to try to "smash things generally." Although violence would be out of place in such a dignified narrative as the *Education*,

³¹ *Letters of Henry Adams 1858-1891*, Worthington Chauncey Ford ed. (New York and Boston, 1930), p. 4. (Hereafter referred to as *Letters I*)

³² Blackmur, "Henry Adams: Three Late Moments," p. 28.

nevertheless Adams carefully orders his paragraphs so as to realize the maximum shock value. When describing the attitude and state of mind of the Adams family just prior to their landing in England on their important diplomatic mission during the anxious days of 1861, this key sentence is blandly (and carefully) positioned: "For a hundred years the chief effort of his family had aimed at bringing the Government of England into intelligent cooperation with the objects and interests of America" (p. 114). The Adams family were perhaps anxious, but in the main, confident. The unsuspecting reader is soothed, lulled into optimistic dreams of the spontaneous success of the mission. All the Adamses prior to Henry had been exemplary successes. And as he notes, "this time the chance of success was promising." But the following paragraph rudely shatters this dream: Adams bluntly announces, with a pronounced change in style, sentence rhythm, and tone,

On May 13, he met the official announcement that England recognized the belligerency of the Confederacy. This beginning of a new education tore up by the roots nearly all that was left of Harvard College and Germany. He had to learn—the sooner the better—that his ideas were the reverse of truth (p. 114).

And of course, as the ironic tone implies, Adams should have known better. Shock, irony, and the marshalling of distinctly antagonistic opposites are favorite devices of Adams. And the common denominator of them all is the theme of personal failure. This theme is largely a literary and rhetorical device, deliberately used to arouse, antagonize, and irritate the reader into some sort of mental and emotional excitement. This is more apparent when Adams makes a slip. On page 235 he writes,

His old education was finished; his new one was not begun, he still loitered a year, feeling himself near the end of a long, anxious, tempestuous, successful voyage, with another to follow, and a summer sea between.

This is rare in the *Education*, a feeling of success, a feeling of accomplishment. Yet on page 236, at the conclusion of the chapter, Adams reverts to form:

. . . but he had no more acquired education than when he first trod the steps of the Adelphia Hotel in November 1858. He could see only one great change, and this was wholly in years.

This is the familiar Adams' failure. Yet it does not ring true, coming after the feeling of success on the previous page. The occasional appearance of such stylistic slips serves to strengthen the belief that the theme of personal failure was carefully used to heighten the ironic tone. Adams wished to have his splash and keep his dog too.

Thus far I have been concerned, negatively, with showing the inadequacy of the idea that Henry Adams considered himself to be a personal failure and that his pessimism can be shown to derive largely from this sense of frustration and failure, and with demonstrating, thus, that the *Education* is not primarily an autobiography. Positively, I have been concerned with pointing out that Adams' intent in writing the series was exactly what he said it was—scientific, didactic, and literary—and that the theme of personal failure can be most safely interpreted as a skillful artist's controlling device, designed to secure as effective a presentation of ideas as the intellectual condition of America would permit.

3

Pessimism was both a pose and a habit of mind with Henry Adams. Only fools and great statesmen were paid to be optimists. Furthermore, as Adams remarks, "no one can afford to pose as an optimist, short of an income of a hundred thousand a year."³³ Adams had about twenty five thousand and considered himself to be neither a great statesman nor a fool; thus, pessimism was for him the only dignified pose. And dignity was important, as well as required. However, something of his pessimism was genuine because his scientific and metaphysical speculations had convinced him that the cherished assumptions of his culture and tradition were totally wrong, and worse than useless; because by stubbornly defending the old notions of order, unity, the unique value of the individual, freedom of the will, one would only hasten the acceleration towards the inevitable catastrophe of all civilization, if not of the cosmos. The twentieth century had begun by announcing the terrible reversal of the eighteenth-century ordered universe where God was the Father, Nature the Mother, and chaos only the result of the actions of man who sinned by opposing the

³³ *Letters II*, p. 532.

domestic harmony of the cosmos. Now, in 1900, the struggle with multiplicity, which the enlightened puritan tradition asserted would be won through the suasion of private morality, was futile, because "order was an accidental relation, obnoxious to Nature." As Adams says, "The kinetic theory of gas is an assertion of ultimate chaos. In plain words, Chaos was the Law of Nature; Order was the dream of man."³⁴ and Karl Pearson had left "science adrift on a sensual raft in the midst of a super-sensual chaos."³⁴ The optimistic theories of Lyell, Darwin and Spencer which had, in the middle of the nineteenth century, so severely shaken conservative orthodoxy were now completely discredited by the discovery of radium and Lord Kelvin's formulation of the second law of thermodynamics. The assumptions of uniformity and natural selection by the survival of the most perfect ("the most highly fitted"), which were not in accord with the facts anyhow, could not survive the onslaught of Nature's chaos (radium, the kinetic theory of gas, and Brownian motion) and the prospect of all energy being ultimately dissipated, degraded, to the awful stillness of the absolute zero of hyper-space. Force was now the ultimate fact of our universe (or multiverse): man's unique capacity was not his intelligence, his capacity for self-contemplation, but his "acute sensibility to higher forces," and his function "as a force of nature was to assimilate these forces." The physicist roundly contradicts the evolutionist:

As an energy he [man] has but one dominant function:—that of accelerating the operation of the second law of thermodynamics. So far as his reason acts as an energy at all, it is a miraculous invention for this purpose, which inspires wonder and almost worship, but in strictness and reason, does not work,—it is only a mechanism; nature's energy which we have agreed to call Will, that lies behind reason, does the work,—and degrades the energy in doing it.³⁵

The law of squares governed the rate of man's acceleration of the second law of thermodynamics, and progress in this direction was indicated by the horsepower man had at his disposal. The year 1870 marked the beginning of the electric

³⁴ *Education*, p. 457, p. 452.

³⁵ Henry Adams, *The Degradation of the Democratic Dogma* (New York, 1910), p. 230. This is Adams' most forthright exposition of the "lugubrious plan." The facts and ideas in this paragraph are drawn largely from this book.

phase (symbolized by the dynamo) which would end in 1917; the final phase, the ethereal phase, would end after four short years, at which time man would have reached ultimate knowledge and energy, and at which time also man and his civilization would either disappear in a cataclysmic explosion, or like the comet of 1843, having safely passed perihelion, would return to the space it came from. In either case, final oblivion was assured. In the words of Arthur Balfour,

Man will go down to the pit and all his thoughts will perish. The uneasy consciousness, which in this obscure corner has for a brief space broken the contented silence of the universe, will be at rest. Matter will know itself no longer, "Imperishable monuments" and "immortal deeds," death itself, and love stronger than death, will be as though they had never been.³⁶

And nobody would care!

Armed with these principles and laws, Adams gloomily looked at the contemporary scene and especially at the political activity of the nations. Socialism, "despotic socialism," was in Europe the inevitable consequence of the corruption (degradation) of democracy. In the United States the Constitution had been overthrown in fact and theory by the Civil War and the rise of vast monopolies and corporations which had corrupted Congress and overthrown the Executive and Judiciary. As early as 1870, Adams wrote of the destruction of the democratic ideals of the writers of the Constitution:

Not only has the whole internal fabric of the government been violently wrenched from its original balance until Congress has assumed authority which it was never intended to hold, but as the country grows and the pressure of business increases, the efficiency of the machine grows steadily less. New powers, new duties, new responsibilities, new burdens of every sort, are incessantly crowding upon the government at the very moment when it finds itself unequal to managing the limited powers it is accustomed to wield. Responsibility no longer exists at Washington.³⁷

In 1893, with the decision by the majority in favor of the single gold standard (Adams favored silver), the triumph of capitalism over the Constitution was complete, and socialistic paternalism, the consequent of capitalism, was inevitable.

³⁶ Arthur Balfour, *Foundations of Belief* (London, 1912), pp 33-4.

³⁷ Henry Adams, "The Session," *The North American Review*, CXI (1870), 59.

Never again would the individual be of any value as a potent and effective force in society. The individual was now more than ever the product of the social organism. Adams likened the history of the United States to the course of the Rhine as it flowed from the glaciers of the Alps to the ocean. When it came within sight of the ocean, it acquired interest "almost painful."

In a democratic ocean science could see something ultimate. Man could go no further. The atom might move, but the general equilibrium could not change.³⁸

The scientific historian could then understand the past and the present, and could predict the future, because the individual had been reduced to an integer, with scarcely any identity of its own. "The process of levelling down—of growing laterally instead of vertically" Adams thought was nearing completion, especially in Europe where socialism was fifty years ahead of the United States. The future pointed only to a final collision of the mass of Russian "despotic socialism" with that of American capitalistic, paternalistic socialism, a collision, as we would say, of two forms of collectivism.

The prospect of socialism, of collectivism, of the equilibrium of the "democratic ocean," was disheartening, but the real tragedy for Adams lay not in accepting the new economy of forces, but in its effect on the individuals who made up society. The artist was no longer a force in society, because there was no place for him in its economy, because the modern man (American model) was stimulated only by "work, whiskey, and cards." This narrowing of the emotional range was exemplified by the loss of the religious instinct. Over and over in *Chartres* Adams emphasizes that religion is essentially emotion, that a medieval church was a symbol primarily of man's emotions and aspirations. To understand them, one must feel them. "Here is your first eleventh-century church" he asks, "How does it affect you?" He constantly stresses the necessity of seeking the emotional response, because otherwise these great monuments are meaningless. We in our time must be taught to feel, because "Our age has lost much of its ear for poetry, as it has its eye for color and line, and its taste for war and worship, wine and women" (p. 29). Writing to Henry James in 1909, Adams

³⁸ Adams, *History of the United States*, IX, 225.

bitterly remarked that "Society no longer shows the intellectual life necessary to enable it to react against a stimulus."³⁹ What was perhaps more discouraging was that the American woman, after the overthrow of the church and religion (in many ways the creation of woman), was becoming, in her desperate attempts to imitate the American man, less and less of a force in society. "Already the American man sometimes felt surprise at finding himself regarded as sexless; the American woman was oftener surprised at finding herself regarded as sexual."⁴⁰ In his two novels, *Esther* and *Democracy*, the heroines are tragically lacking in power and ability to direct and control men and society. Both are quite helpless. A twelfth-century woman, a Queen Margaret, would have put them both to shame.

The quality of this sort of pessimism is largely that of the feeling of deprivation, of loss of values which were once good and meaningful. Adams accepted the inevitable because he believed that "the form of Society which survives is always right." Yet the fight was not completely lost; man still had some capacity, although it was growing less and less, to control his destiny, to economize his forces. Henry would not go all the way with his brother Brooks who battered man into the crushing jaws of the vice of economic determinism with his sledge hammer of logic. "One need not," he wrote to Brooks, "love Socialism in order to point out the logical necessity for Society to march that way; and the wisdom of doing it intelligently if it is to do it at all."⁴¹ Adams' unyielding Puritan morality rejected categorically the necessity of having to accept the inevitable in a stupid, haphazard fashion when man could still do it *intelligently*, when he could still make intelligent use of his doom. The Universities were shirking their moral obligation if they refused at least to try to find a solution for the coming events. In the "Letter" Adams drops his bantering, ironic tone, and hits out directly.

The question whether the plant exists to produce the flower, or to produce the leaf is vital. The University, as distinct from the technological school, has no proper function than to teach that the flower of vital energy is Thought, and that not Instinct but Intellect is the highest power of supernatural Will.⁴²

³⁹ *Letters II*, p. 522.

⁴⁰ *Education*, p. 447.

⁴¹ *Letters II*, p. 178.

⁴² *The Degradation of the Democratic Dogma*, p. 206.

He believes with Bacon and Descartes that

the intended effect of intellectual education is . . . a habit of doubt, it is only in a very secondary sense a habit of timidity or despair. To a certain point, the more education, the more hesitation; but beyond that point, confidence should begin.⁴³

If the Universities did not teach men to act with intelligence and confidence, then society would deny itself the final grace, the final badge of self-respect, of meeting its doom intelligently. The laws of history had shown that civilization collapses because it generates more power than it knows how to administer and control. Rome failed, Adams concludes in the *Education*, because the Cross gave it more power than it knew how to handle. There was still hope that the administrators of society—those unseen trustees of the helpless public—could be educated to administer power with economy and confidence. "Thus far, since five or ten thousand years, the mind had successfully reacted, and nothing yet proved that it would fail to react—but it would need to jump."⁴⁴ Aside from his fatalism, Adams' genuine pessimism lies in his awareness of the discrepancy between his hopeful moral convictions and the failure of the mind to "jump." The only thing the menagerie was doing was "chewing its tails in religious silence." It was this inertia of the modern mind which caused Adams to cry out, "What is the end of doubling up our steam and electric power every four years to infinity if we don't increase our thought power?"⁴⁵

The waste of intelligence in the realm of art was also appalling. The conservative Christian anarchist, as Adams playfully called himself, set out to revivify poetry only to discover, as we have seen above, that the literary world was too inert to criticize and too degraded to follow the "intuitions of instinct." Writing to Albert Stanburrough Cook in 1910, Adams spoke of his hope to be able to nurse the last spark of artistic instinct in society as long as it was possible.

My idea is the world outside—the so-called modern world—can only pervert and degrade the primitive instinct of art and feeling, and that our only chance is to accept the limited number of survivors—the one-in-a-thousand of born artists and poets—and to intensify the energy of feeling within that radiant centre.⁴⁶

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

⁴⁴ *Education*, p. 498.

⁴⁵ *Letters II*, p. 469.

⁴⁶ *Letters II*, p. 547.

The *Chartres-Education* series was designed, in part, to be an implement to "intensify the energy of feeling" by showing what the past had done when imagination and feeling were expressive of the fundamental assumptions and beliefs of society. The trouble with the art of the twentieth century was that it was merely reduplicating what had been done before, reusing symbols that were no longer vital, using assumptions that were the foundations of a dead past. Warton, the artist in *Esther*, discouraged at the prospect of reduplicating fourth-century Christian art instead of painting twentieth-century Christian art, remarks sadly, "I believe you are right. . . . I feel more and more that our work is thrown away."⁴⁷ To close up the gap in general imagination, Adams wrote the *Education*; he hoped to provide a foundation for artistic, as well as political and intellectual, activity. But society seemed bent on social suicide. R. P. Blackmur writes,

It is the instruments of control that are subject to destruction, never controlled energy that dies; for the instruments are all fictions—conventions, contracts—and all invariably come to be framed against the public interest. If stoicism, as Adams said, is moral suicide, social suicide consists in putting up with fictions whose sole sanction lies in the credulity they commanded when faith that inspired them is gone.⁴⁸

It was this waste of artistic energy in worshipping before false idols which hurt Adams the most.

In his old age, when he was nearly blind and, moreover, weakened from a stroke, Adams discovered in the music of the twelfth century an expression in which he could "unite all his aspiration and interest without distrust and anguish and doubt."⁴⁹ The "Prison Song" of Richard the Lion Hearted—

O Richard! O, mon Roi
L'universe t'abandonne

—when sung was for Adams a symbol of intense significance. R. P. Blackmur calls Adams' discovery of this symbol an "act of art," an "illustration of the representative imagination."

⁴⁷ Henry Adams (Francis Snow Compton), *Esther*, ed. Robert E. Spiller (New York, 1938), p. 81.

⁴⁸ Blackmur, "Henry and Brooks Adams," p. 329.

⁴⁹ Blackmur, "Henry Adams: Three Late Moments," p. 15.

We turn as Adams turned in his Prison Song to the support of some existing form or convention of the general imagination, as if, merely by existing and because we share it, its own profoundly arbitrary character might virtually lose itself in the exacting actuality of form. All that we are truly capable of believing is what we can put into our gesture, our buildings, our images, or our songs. . . . So Adams took his Prison Song, as deliberate art, hardly veiled gesture, to focus his sense of life.⁴⁹

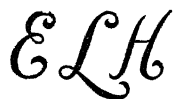
This "act of art" occurred after his literary endeavors had ceased, but is illustrative of what Adams had been striving for in the *Chartres-Education* series. In it he had relentlessly exposed the fraudulent aspects of twentieth-century society and had—by indirection—tried to show the way towards a more honest and more vital foundation for society. The Virgin had once been a force, a symbol of unity, which had "concentrated in herself the whole rebellion of man against fate." But today she was bankrupt, "looking down from a deserted heaven, into an empty church, on a dead faith." The Newtonian universe of the eighteenth century was equally bankrupt; Addison's Ode—"The Spacious Firmament on High"—fervent with the religious emotion of the eighteenth-century mind, was an artistic anachronism in the twentieth century, because, as Adams bitterly discovered when his sister died, God was certainly not a person, and furthermore, He was not a good craftsman. Nature was a "chaos of anarchic and purposeless forces" which had for many thousand years "gone on sabring men and women with the same air of sensual pleasure." Any beauty, any feeling for order and unity in nature was an illusion, pure and simple. And the dynamo of the electric phase was a symbol of infinity, of infinite, unthinking, unknowing force, quite unresponsive to prayer or imaginative aspiration. And after 1917 it would abdicate its position of primary importance in favor of the atom. Adams felt a desperate need for a new expression of human life in all its forms of activity—politics, poetry, painting, philosophy—which would be consonant to the facts of the modern multiverse. Here his imagination failed him; he was neither a Kepler nor a Newton. He could only suggest, he could only point to what he thought was the way, but he could not give or provide the adequate expression. Perhaps he considered the comet to be a possible symbol of man and his fate in the modern multiverse, the comet, brother of Thought, which had blazed

briefly through the heavens, passed its perihelion, and disappeared into outer darkness. But Adams had neither the time nor the strength to work out completely the possibilities of this symbol. Yet in the "Prison Song" of Richard he found help and satisfaction, a half-way station, not because of the song itself, but because it was a form which was available, sympathetic, and convenient. In no way did he imitate a dead poet's aspirations and feelings: Adams only borrowed, as Blackmur makes clear, an available form to use for his own purposes, "to focus his sense of life." Whatever pessimism there is in *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* and the *Education*—pessimism either from his fatalistic notions, or from his sense of deprivation, or from his despair at the waste of intelligence and artistic energy in modern society—its importance lies not in itself, but in its effect. Adams hoped to encourage modern society to see itself in the light of its own world, to react with choice, purpose, and confidence "on lines of force that attract [its] world," to make intelligent use of its impending doom, to seek new symbols with which it could honestly express itself, to discover its "Prison Song" wherein its illusions and aspirations could be sharply focused. *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*, *The Education of Henry Adams*, and the pessimism of Henry Adams are important, not for what they are in themselves, but for what they do, for the response which they arouse in the reader. Adams own words, which he wrote concerning the statue erected over his wife's grave, have characteristic and pointed meaning for his books.

The interest of the figure was not in its meaning, but in the response of the observer. As Adams sat there, numbers of people came, for the figure seemed to have become a tourist fashion, and all wanted to know its meaning. Most took it for a portrait-statue, and the remnant were vacant minded in the absence of a personal guide. . . . The only exceptions were the clergy, who taught a lesson even deeper. One after another brought companions there, and, apparently fascinated by their own reflection, broke out passionately against the expression they felt in the figure of despair, of atheism, of denial. Like the others, the priest saw only what he brought. Like all great artists, St. Gaudens held up the mirror and no more. The American layman had lost sight of ideals; the American priest had lost sight of faith.⁵⁰

Baltimore Maryland.

⁵⁰ Adams, *Education*, p. 329.



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THE ROLE OF MORGAN LE FAY IN *SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT*

By DENVER EWING BAUGHAN

It would be hard to find in all English literature a character so obviously the moving cause of an entire plot¹ and at the same time so misunderstood and neglected as Morgan le Fay in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Too much concern for sources and analogs and too little for the meaning and purpose of the romance *per se* have made a reconsideration of her unique role, together with the confusion regarding it, long overdue. That her magical powers in the beheading episode have been overlooked as a unifying and purpose-giving force and have consistently been interpreted as either defeated by Gawain's virtue or as an outright failure seems contrary not only to all that is known of her prowess among fourteenth-century romancers but also to all that has been written regarding the supposed efficacy of magic at that time. By emphasizing textual matter (rather than sources), the following study attempts to show, first, that Morgan le Fay's plan succeeds, and, secondly, that through Gawain's chastity the beheading episode constitutes an organic part of both the theme and the action.

¹ G. L. Kittredge in *A Study of Gawain and the Green Knight* (Cambridge, Mass., 1916), p. 131, calls Morgan le Fay "an ancient and highly honored lady whose magic arts are the moving cause of the Green Knight's expedition and therefore of the entire plot."

Morgan le Fay's plan, as stated by Bercilak (the Green Knight), was twofold: it had as its purpose the frightening of Guinevere and the shaming of Arthur's court. Concerning this plan, J. R. Hulbert raises the following questions and offers a solution:

By means of the horn and mantle tests she [Morgain in *la Mule sanz Frain*] did bring humiliation upon Guinevere and Arthur. But this test [Morgan le Fay's] is quite a different matter; by it Gawain gains only greater glory, and Arthur's court a better reputation. Being an enchantress, she of course knew what would be the outcome of her scheme. Further, if she was inspired by enmity, why was she so just in carrying out the tests? She tests him with perfect justice: had he proved disloyal to the lord of the castle, he [Gawain] would have been killed. What was her motive? What could she gain by this test? The explanation [Bercilak's] is one that seems to be sensible superficially but is inherently unreasonable. It was almost certainly added by some late redactor familiar with Morgain's horn and mantle tests.²

The questions that Hulbert raises go to the heart of the romance and will be answered in due time, but his conclusion, which, according to his own statement, makes the appearance of Morgan "anomalous and almost certainly not original"³ would also rule her out of the romance altogether, apparently because her part in it is difficult to explain. More reasonable with regard to the authenticity of Morgan's appearance but not without a similar confusion with regard to the success of Morgan's plan is G. L. Kittredge's explanation:

We note, besides, that the motive in question [Morgan's enmity toward Guinevere] is not well worked into the fabric of the story. Not only is the Fay's trick a failure, but there is no indication, in our own author's description of the scene at court, that Guinevere showed any particular alarm: certainly she was in no danger of death from shock. Besides, one is rather surprised that Gawain should part with Bernlak [after the final episode] on such cordial terms after the blunt avowal of his [Bercilak's] evil errand. It is safe, I should suppose, to infer that we are here dealing with a substitution. . . . Now our English author shows at the beginning and at the close of his poem (in passages that are surely his own) a distinct desire to attach his narrative to the orthodox Arthur saga, referring to the "Brutus Books" as his written source. As a means

² "Syr Gawayn and the Grene Knyȝt," *Modern Philology*, XII (1915-16), 454.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 462.

to this end, no doubt, he decided to make Morgan the Fay the "only begetter" of the whole affair. . . .⁴

Both Hulbert and Kittredge, it should be noted, are reasonably cautious in advancing their respective theories that the plan was added by a late redactor and that it was a substitution. They leave room for other explanations, and since the case rests almost solely upon the relationship between the beheading episode and Morgan's plan, a re-examination of that episode in the light of the plan is necessary if the paradoxes are to be resolved.

In regard to Bercilak's frightfulness, it can with certainty be said that if looks and actions transcending nature and all the conventions of Arthur's court could be made to arouse the emotions of wonder and fear, Bercilak's looks and actions aroused those emotions. Granted that knights dressed in some solid color and mounted on chargers of similar hue were not without precedent, "the extension of this hue," as Kittredge points out, "to face, hair, beard, and eyebrows, and to the horse's mane and hide"⁵ is original with the poet and no doubt intended to incite wonder. Another extension (with similar intention) seems to be the utilization of the full effects of Bercilak's uncanny penchant for mocking laughter and a rolling of the eyes. To the court he appeared an "aghilch mayster, / On þe most on þe molde on mesure hyghe. . . ."⁶ All agreed that

Such a fole vpon folde, ne freke þat hym rydes,
Wat3 neuer sene in þat sale wyth sy3t er þat tyme,
with y3e.⁷

In all, some eighty-eight lines without a word of dialog are given over to a description of this equally marvelous horse and man, and for one purpose—fear.

When Bercilak finally condescended to speak, he made it unmistakably clear that the other aspect of his mission was the humiliation of Arthur.

⁴ Kittredge, pp. 132-3.

⁵ Kittredge, pp. 141-2.

⁶ *Sir Gawain & the Green Knight*, ed. J. R. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon (Oxford, 1930), p. 5. 135-6. All quotations herein from *Sir Gawain* are from this text.

⁷ P. 7. 196-8.

“Wher is,” he sayd,
 “Þe gouernour of þis gyng? Gladly I wolde
 Se þat segg in syȝt, and with hymself speke
 raysoun.”

To knyȝteȝ he kest his yȝe,
 And reled hym vp and doun;
 He stemmed, and con studie
 Quo walt þer most renoun.⁸

Now nothing could be more certain than that Bercilak (empowered with Morgan's magic) knew exactly which one was Arthur. He also knew which one was Gawain because he knew already the role that Gawain would play. Under such circumstances it is easy to imagine Arthur's embarrassment while the knights were turning their eyes toward him, for at the same time Bercilak's eyes were turning everywhere except toward Arthur.

Powerless to resist Bercilak's insult to their king, the knights became more and more afraid.

Al studied þat þer stod, and stalked hym nerre
 Wyth al þe wonder of þe worlde what he worth schulde.
 For fele sellyeȝ had þay sen, þot such neuer are;
 Forþi for fanloum and fayryȝe þe folk þere hit demed.⁹
 Þerfore to answere watȝ arȝe mony apæl freke,
 And al stouned at his steuen and stonstil seten
 In a swoghe sylence þurȝ þe sale riche. . . .¹⁰

This fear ceased to be merely physical when Arthur announced that he was the ruler of this dwelling and that he was Arthur himself. With what appeared to be malicious irony, Bercilak said that the fame of Arthur and his knights had spread far and wide but that the present mission was peaceful. Arthur, however, insisted that

“If þou craue batayl bare,
 Here fayleȝ þou not to fyȝt.”¹¹

⁸ P. 8. 224-31.

⁹ Regarding this line Elizabeth M. Wright says (“Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, XXXIV [1935], 159): “It was the uncanniness and magic that made the horse and his rider really terrifying.”

¹⁰ P. 8. 237-43.

¹¹ P. 9. 277-8.

Since the knights had been wondering how any man could survive the blows of such a giant and why he had not equipped himself for battle, the poet seems to have intended the beheading episode as an antidote to the follies of knight-errantry. Certainly Arthur's insistence on battle and his later disillusionment when Gawain's spiritual force accomplished what physical force could not implies as much.

Bercilak's answer to Arthur's inept proposal to fight is the challenge: I'll let you chop my head off now if you'll agree to seek me out and let me chop your head off a year hence. Many a knight, courageous enough physically, must have shaken with fear at the thought of the second part of that contract. Concerning that fear and Bercilak's reaction to it, the poet says:

If he hem stowned vpon fyrst, stiller were þanne
 Alle þe heredmen in halle, þe hyȝ and þe loȝe.
 Þe renk on his rouncé hym ruced in his sadel,
 And runischly his rede yȝen he reled aboute,
 Bende his bresed broȝeȝ blycande grene,
 Wayued his berde for to wayte quo-so wolde ryse.
 When non wolde kepe hym with carp he coȝed ful hyȝe,
 Ande rimed hym ful richley, and ryȝt hym to speke:
 "What, is þis Arþureȝ hous," quop þe hapel þenne,
 "Þat al þe rous rennes of þurȝ ryalmes so mony?
 Where is now your sourquydrye and your conquestes,
 Your gryndellayk and your greme, and your grete wordes?
 Now is þe reuel and þe renoun of þe Rounde Table
 Ouerwalt wyth a worde of on wyȝes speche,
 For al dares for drede withoute dynt schewed!"
 Wyth þis he laȝes so loude þat þe lorde greued;
 Þe blod schot for scham into his schyre face and lere. . . .¹²

Thereupon shame and anger replaced fear, and Arthur stepped forward and took the ax.

Now hatȝ Arthure his axe, and þe halme grypeȝ,
 And sturnely stureȝ hit aboute, þat stryke wyth hit þoȝt.
 Þe stif mon hym bifore stod vpon hyȝt,
 Herre þen ani in þe hous by þe hede and more.
 Wyth sturne schere þer he stod he stroked his berde,
 And wyth a countenaunce dryȝe he droȝ down his cote,
 No more mate ne dismayd for hys mayn dinteȝ
 Pen any burne vpon bench hade broȝt hym to drynk
 of wyne.¹³

¹² P. 10. 301-18.

¹³ P. 11. 330-8.

Obviously the poet's problem here was a difficult one. In order to make assurance doubly sure regarding the second half of Morgan le Fay's plan, Arthur had to strike. Yet, through respect for the divinity that hedges a king, even a debased one (as Arthur was at this time),¹⁴ the poet gave to the account something of Morgan's magic so that it seems almost as if Arthur did not strike. Thus because of a deceptive wording (particularly *þat stryke wyth hit pozt*), Tolkien and Gordon,¹⁵ Hulbert,¹⁶ and Kittredge¹⁷ undoubtedly read *mayn dinte3* as "threats" or "threatened blows." On the other hand, G. H. Gerould¹⁸ and B. J. Whiting¹⁹ both read the two words in question according to the definitions set down in *A Middle-English Dictionary* (F. H. Stratmann), *The English Dialect Dictionary* (Joseph Wright), *The New English Dictionary*, and (curiously enough) Tolkien and Gordon's gloss—that is to say, as "great blows" or the equivalent.²⁰

Had Hulbert followed the dictionary definitions here, most of his questions regarding Morgan's motive would be answered, as in like manner would Kittredge's doubts that her motive has been worked into the fabric of the story. Nevertheless it must not be forgotten that Morgan is not only an angry woman, but an angry woman in command of one of the most powerful weapons known to the medieval mind. Of her it is well to remember that Bercilak said:

¹⁴ J. E. Wells, *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050-1400* (New Haven, 1926), says of the original Arthur: "He exhibits none of the carnal looseness of conduct manifested in his last days by the Arthur of the later accounts" (p. 34) and "It is to be noted that Arthur begets an illegitimate son . . ." (p. 44).

¹⁵ *Sir Gawain & the Green Knight*, Intro., p. ix (synopsis): "In anger then Arthur seized the axe and was about to strike. . . ."

¹⁶ Hulbert, p. 454: "By it [the beheading test] Gawain gains only greater glory, and Arthur's court a better reputation."

¹⁷ Kittredge, p. 5 (synopsis): "Arthur springs forward and grasps the axe; but Gawain interposes and begs the contest for himself. The king gives way, by the advice of his council."

¹⁸ *The New Nelson's English Readings* (New York, 1937), I, 141.

¹⁹ *The College Survey of English Literature* (New York, 1942), I, 117.

²⁰ Apparently the only textual note on the passage in question is that found in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. Sir Israel Gollancz, with introductory essays by Mabel Day and Mary S. Serjeantson, London, 1940, p. 102: "for *hys mayn dinte3*; literally 'on account of, or in the presence of Arthur's mighty blows,' i. e. the blows he was about to give. But the agreement was that only one was to be given. One would rather expect 'minte3,' in the sense of the threatening gestures or movements described in 331." This text will be referred to hereafter as Gollancz.

Morgne þe goddes
 Perfore hit is hir name:
 Weldeþ non so hyȝe hawtesse
 Ðat ho ne con make ful tame.²¹

What would have been the point then of having Arthur merely prepare to strike? To achieve her purpose not only did the so-called greatest of all knights have to strike with great strokes, but his great strokes had to avail him nothing. On the other hand, her nephew's one stroke had to do the task with what seems perfect justice.

Gauan gripped to his ax, and gederes hit on hyȝt,
 Þe kay fot on þe fold he before sette,
 Let hit down lyȝtly lyȝt on þe naked. . . .²²

Whatever this test may have been, it is made abundantly clear here that it was not a physical test. Hence, as will be seen, Gawain must have had some unique virtue that made the beheading his game and no one else's.

Meanwhile, though the poet has said much about the wonder and fear of the court, nothing is said about Guinevere's reactions in particular until after Bercilak has retrieved his head and made his departure. What is said then, however, is contrary to Kittredge's observation that "there is no indication, in our author's own description of the scene at court, that Guinevere showed any particular alarm."²³

Ðaþ Arþer þe hende kyng at hert hade wonder,
 He let no semblaunt be sene, bot sayde ful hyȝe
 To þe comlych quene wyth cortays speche,
 "Dere dame, to-day demay yow neuer;
 Wel bycommes such craft vpon Cristmasse,
 Laykyng of enterludeþ, to laȝe and to syng,
 Among þise kynde caroles of knyȝteþ and ladyeþ.
 Neuer þe lece to my mete I may me wel dres,
 Fer I haf senaselly, I may not forsake."²⁴

²¹ Pp. 75-6 2452-5.

²² P. 13. 421-3.

²³ Kittredge, p. 132. An illustration of the beheading, probably by an artist of the poet's own time, shows Guinevere affrighted and clinging to Arthur. See illustration in *Sir Gawain* facsimile (*Pearl, Cleanmess, Patience and Sir Gawain*, Intro. Sir I. Gollancz, London, 1931) and Intro., pp. 10-1.

²⁴ P. 15. 467-75.

If she had not been frightened,²⁵ why would Arthur have tried to console Guinevere by introducing the subject of fear? And what kind of woman would she have had to be, not to have been frightened when the very bravest of Arthur's knights had been terrified? It seems clear that the poet is utilizing the same device here that Shakespeare utilizes in *Macbeth* when he passes over in silence the progress of Lady Macbeth's disintegration in order to make it all the more poignant in the sleep-walking scene. In short, by insisting during the beheading business that even the boldest were filled with terror and by having Arthur solicitous of his queen's comfort, the poet achieves more by implication than could have been achieved by outright statement.

For critics of Morgan le Fay's plan thus to assume that Guinevere was not frightened and that Arthur and his court were not shamed is to overlook all the implications bearing on these points, together with two important pieces of internal evidence: Arthur's attempt to console Guinevere in her fear and his attempt and failure to behead Bercilak.

* * *

As a device to lure Gawain to Bercilak's castle and thus give impetus to the plot, the beheading episode has been given due credit by most critics,²⁶ but, as a thematic device to illuminate and give meaning to the rest of the romance, it has been either neglected or considered ancillary to a theme dictated by the temptation scenes. Neglect and undervaluation, however, seem out of harmony with both the intentions of the poet as artist and moralist and the character of Gawain as portrayed in fourteenth-century romances. Hence Morgan le Fay's plan, if artistically successful, should so combine the materials of plot and theme as to prove that Gawain's ability to deliver a clean blow is no less a virtue than his ability to withstand the temptations of the lady and receive almost with impunity the return blow.

²⁵ See Intro, p. xi (particularly footnote 1) for Tolkien and Gordon's statement to the effect that Morgan's magic apparently succeeded in frightening Guinevere. Kittredge's conclusion (p. 132) that this part of the plan failed because Guinevere was not frightened to death seems to demand more than Morgan intended to do.

²⁶ Tolkien and Gordon apparently do not believe that the quest was predestined to fall to Gawain. Intro, p. xi: "The beheading game was a way of drawing a knight to her [Morgan's] castle"

Certainly Gawain, as no other of Arthur's knights, could have implemented almost any known virtue. Wells characterizes him as

mighty in arms, courageous of heart, true to his word, faithful to his duty, pure of body and of mind, courteous in even the most trying conditions, fine of spirit and ideal, devout of act.²⁷

It is therefore not surprising that he was the only one of Arthur's knights about whom a whole cycle of English poems was written, was probably the original hero of the Holy Grail, and was often more prominent in a romance than the ostensible hero.²⁸ Faced with such variety of virtues to choose from, Hulbert concludes that

The poet of *GGK* . . . had a right to use almost any eminent virtue. As a matter of fact he chose to turn the episode of Gawain and the lady into a test for loyalty.²⁹

As Hulbert's settling upon the one virtue loyalty proves, the poet did not have the right to choose almost any eminent virtue. He had to choose a virtue that is applicable to the entire romance and not simply to the temptation scenes. Now there is nothing in the beheading episode to indicate that Arthur's abortive attempt and Gawain's success illustrate loyalty. Hence loyalty does not satisfy the conditions, even though it does play an important part in the episode of Gawain and the lady.

Tolkien and Gordon, like Hulbert, make the temptation scenes bear the burden of the theme, which, to them, is a test of both loyalty and chastity.³⁰ They also share with him the opinion that Gawain's virtue in the beheading episode defeated Morgan's plan.³¹ Aside from the fact that this opinion ignores the supposed efficacy of magic, it assumes an enmity between Aunt and Nephew that is nowhere suggested and ignores the fact that Morgan's plan was predicated upon Bercilak's being beheaded. Had there been no Gawain at Arthur's court the forward movement of the romance and Morgan's plan would indeed have been defeated, but she considered it sufficient humiliation that Gawain alone was possessed of the virtue that would give point to the romance.

²⁷ Wells, p. 56.

²⁹ Hulbert, p. 694.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

³⁰ Intro., p. xi.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. x. (See also Hulbert, p. 454, and Kittredge, p. 132.)

On the other hand, as proof that Bercilak had come to the court to be beheaded, he spoke thus to Gawain when the latter accepted the challenge:

“Sir Gawan, so mot I þryue,
As I am ferly fayn
Þis dint þat þou schal dryue.”³²

Whatever virtue, therefore, Tolkien and Gordon had in mind as operating here, it could not have defeated Morgan's purpose.

Unlike the preceding critics, Mabel Day recognizes the artistic necessity of the poet's having had to make each of the episodes bear its part of the thematic burden.

The story of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* [she observes] can be divided into two parts, distinguished as the Beheading Game and the Temptation. . . . Each is the story of a test. In the first, Gawain is tested in respect of his courage and faithfulness to his plighted word; in the second, in respect of chastity and again of faithfulness to his promise.³³

Again, much that has just been said with regard to loyalty applies here. Granted that Gawain's ability to behead Bercilak did require both courage and faithfulness to his plighted word, it is not likely that these virtues rendered him unique among all the knights at Arthur's court. Surely Arthur himself was courageous and a man of his word, but these qualities were of no avail. And so far as faithfulness to his promise was concerned, Gawain did not have to bother about that until after the beheading was completed.

With his usual shrewd insight Sir I. Gollancz recognizes Gawain as the knight of chastity³⁴ and the romance as illustrating his triumphs over all temptations to break his vows of chastity.³⁵ Since, however, the beheading episode does not involve any such temptation, Gollancz's observation, like the observations of the other critics, leaves much to be desired. Nevertheless, of all the virtues, chastity is the one that most

³² P. 12 387-9.

³³ Gollancz, Intro., pp. xx-i. A footnote to the word *chastity* takes issue with Hulbert by citing lines 1773-5 as evidence "That Gawain's chief fear is that he may sin against God" and therefore "his duty of loyalty to his host takes the second place."

³⁴ See *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, ed. A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller (New York, 1938), I. 367.

³⁵ See Hulbert, p. 694.

closely approaches the absolute. In a court where even the king himself, as portrayed in the secular romances, was guilty of moral looseness, the opportunity for the poet to capitalize Gawain's essential goodness in this virtue, even at the expense of that king's humiliation, was without parallel. Moreover such a theme was thoroughly consonant with the character of the poet, if his abhorrence of adultery is not without foundation,³⁶ and also with Morgan le Fay's magic, which was itself wholly concerned with absolutes.³⁷ In connection with this "only begotter" of the entire plot, as Kittredge calls her,³⁸ it is inconceivable that the poet should have viewed her as a cheap enchantress. Except for her enmity toward Guinevere, her plan and her fame as a healer are in the best traditions of the theurgic art as opposed to the goetic practices of that time. As Authur would one day "fare to Avalun, to the the fairest of all maidens, to Argante [Morgan] the queen, an elf most fair . . ." ³⁹ who would make his wounds all sound, so here that same Morgan would send Bercilak to purge and heal the court of its moral corruptness.

Thus through Morgan le Fay's plan the beheading episode is no less an apotheosization of chastity than are the other parts of the romance. And, though in life (as the poet would say) the beginning very seldom matches the end, in the art of magic and the magic of art the noble enchantress had the power sufficient to her dream.

The acceptance of Morgan le Fay's plan as implemented by a magic predestined to succeed is therefore basic to a proper understanding of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*: first, because it answers the many and seemingly insoluble questions that have been raised regarding the plot and, secondly, because it provides the romance with a theme that is not only consistent in pattern throughout but one that gives a new dimension to the hitherto anomalous beheading episode.

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³⁶ Gollancz, Intro., p. xxxiii.

³⁷ See W. C. Curry, *Shakespeare's Philosophical Patterns* (Baton Rouge, 1937), p. 177.

³⁸ Kittredge, p. 133.

³⁹ *Arthurian Chronicles: Wace and Layamon*, Intro. L. A. Paton (London, 1937), p. 264. That Morgan had the reputation of being divine and not diabolical, Roger S. Loomis, *Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance* (New York, 1927), p. 284, says: "The Grail Bearer, moreover, like Merlin and Morgan le Fay, can produce explicit testimony to her divinity." See also pp. 192 and 305.

KNIGHT'S TALE 38

By EDWARD B. HAM

Although Giraudoux has obligingly counted out the thirty-seven Amphitryon plays which antedated his own, the number of past commentaries on the *Knight's Tale* tempts me to no such scholarly urge. Suffice it to concede that the title of this paper is an egregious understatement, for during the past hundred years Chaucer's romance has endured incessant poundings, great and small, from every manner of research. It can easily withstand another.

The student who reads his *Knight's Tale* for the first time without previous exposure to learned commentary normally reacts to the poem as something reasonably pleasant and certainly uncomplicated. Until about the turn of the present century, professorial skirmishes with Chaucer's intentions reflected, usually *ex silentio*, a similar freedom from the real or created clouds of obscurity and latter-day mystification. The elements of mediaeval *courtoisie* seemed to be taken rather much in stride, even if their significance was not always fully appreciated. Later studies have more than "rehabilitated" Chaucer as the sophisticated poet of courtly love, yet current interpretations have become entangled with various issues which, though interesting in themselves, are only partially relevant to the main point: e.g., Chaucer's attitude towards the *Teseida*, the measure of seriousness in his narrative, Boethian and planetary influences, the play of realism, the strenuously debated "contrast" between Palamon and Arcite. While the *Knight's Tale* is still a pleasant recital, modern scholarship would none the less take away some of its fourteenth- and nineteenth-century simplicity.

The several facets of literary interpretation in the *Knight's Tale* have been so frequently discussed, often with shameless repetition, that neither exhaustive bibliography nor prolonged *mise au point* is desirable here. Ample references are provided by J. R. Hulbert in *SP*, XXVI (1929), 375-385; by R. A. Pratt in *Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales* (ed. Bryan-Dempster; Chicago, 1941), pp. 88-90; and by A. H.

Marckwardt in the *University of Michigan Contributions in Modern Philology*, V (1947), *passim*. For a clear guide to Chaucer's "mediaevalization" of the *Teseida* and to his essential purpose in the *Knight's Tale*, the most useful secondary source is a chapter in which this story is not even mentioned: C. S. Lewis,¹ "What Chaucer really did to *Il Filostrato*," in *Essays and Studies*, XVII (1932), 56-75.

While scholarship has made abundantly available, for virtually every separate stitch in the fabric of the *Knight's Tale*, the observations and counter-observations which relate to *courtoisie*, the final correlation remains surprisingly incomplete. This paper is written with no glow of illusory discovery, nor is it especially innocent of the shameless repetition with which others have just been charged; but perhaps it will at least underscore the need for some simplification in perspective, with due reference, of course, to Chaucer's desire to produce something more than amiable chronicle.

A miniature anthology of opinions relevant to Chaucer's purpose in the *Knight's Tale* is enough to show how lightly the spirit of learned contention has been slumbering since 1900:

Chaucer (ca. 1385-1387)

And which of yow that bereth hym best of alle,
That is to seyn, that telleth in this caas
Tales of best sentence and moost solaas. . . .

(*General Prologue*, vv. 796-798)

Lat se wher thou kanst tellen aught in geeste. . .
In which ther be som murthe or som doctryne.

(*Canterbury Tales*, Fragment VII, vv. 933, 935)

Ek for to wynnen love in sondry ages,
In sondry londes, sondry ben usages.

(*Troilus and Criseyde*, II, vv. 27-28)

And though that he were worthy, he was wys. . .
He was a verray, parfit gentil knyght.

(*General Prologue*, vv. 68, 72)

Lewis, C. S.—Chaucer intends to teach, as well as to paint, the mystery of courtly love . . . gives instruction by example in the course of a concrete story . . . never forgets his erotically didactic purpose. . . . But with Chaucer, we are rooted in the

¹ For further analysis of *Troilus and Criseyde* in this connection, see also his *Allegory of Love* (Oxford, 1946), pp. 176-197.

materials are organized and contributory to a complex design expressing the nature of the noble life. . . . The real moral issue in the poem (is concerned with order and the noble life as) bulwarks against the ever-threatening forces of chaos. . . . (Theseus) the central figure.—*PMLA*, LXV (1950), 919-929.

Cowling, George H.—Its theme is honour amongst friends. Its subject is the rivalry of Palamon and Arcite. . . . Theseus . . . governs the issue of the conflict.—*Chaucer* (New York, 1927), pp. 153-154.

Root, R. K.—Theseus . . . is the motive power of the plot; his acts and decisions really determine the whole story. . . . The *Knight's Tale* is preëminently a web of splendidly pictured tapestry.—*Chaucer and his poetry* (Boston, 1922), pp. 171-172.

Dodd, William G.—Chaucer's purpose in the *Knight's Tale*, it is generally held, is to show the conflict between love and friendship (and) to show "that love ne lordshipe Wol noght, his thonkes, have no felaweshipe."—*Courtly Love in Chaucer and Gower* (Boston, 1913), p. 238.

Manly, J. M.—The story in Chaucer's hands becomes primarily a presentation of the conflict between love and the closest conceivable bonds of friendship, in which, although love is for a time triumphant, the claims of friendship are finally re-asserted in the end.—*Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer* (New York, 1928), p. 541.

Pratt, Robert A.—When Chaucer finally wrote the *Knight's Tale*, he . . . treated it as courtly romance. . . . Realizing that the outcome of the story largely depended on supernatural destiny, he made the characterization of his leading actors subservient to the narrative.—*PMLA*, LXII (1947), 613-615.

Curry, Walter C.—The real conflict behind the surface action of the story is a conflict between the planets, Saturn and Mars. . . . On the other hand, Chaucer is immensely and primarily interested in the forward action of his story and in the conflicting passions of his characters. . . . He has made of scientific astrology a handmaiden to his literary art.—*Chaucer and the mediaeval sciences* (New York, 1926), pp. 120, 153-154.

Tatlock, J. S. P.—The *Knight's Tale* is a brilliant romance of picturesque incident, with little and weak emotional interest. . . . The subtle and perhaps only half-deliberate satire which

runs through the *Knight's Tale*. . . .—*Development and chronology of Chaucer's works* (Chaucer Society, Second Series, XXXVII; 1907), pp. 67, 232.

Patch, Howard R.—There is no intention here of creating a romance of chivalry, if in such literature passages at arms are of chief importance. Nor is the love affair stressed for its own sake so much as for the humor it reflects upon the heroes. With remarkably simple technique Chaucer's story gives us the irony of youth, the irony of young men in their tremendous concern for a young lady; and the opportunity for dramatic reflections of that kind is what, I think, originally commended the plot to the special interest of the English poet.—*On re-reading Chaucer* (Harvard University Press, 1939), p. 205.

Robinson, F. N.—Some critics have been led, unjustifiably, to pronounce the *Knight's Tale* a satire on chivalry or courtly love. . . . The *Knight's Tale* would never have engaged, as it does, the sympathy of the reader if it had been written primarily as a discussion of such an academic problem (as Hulbert proposes).—*Poetical Works of Chaucer* (Boston, 1933), pp. 5, 772.

* If it be surmised that these testimonies have been either trimmed or arranged with "slidyng entente," the reader has only to check original contexts to verify that Chaucer's objective has, to put it mildly, been subjected to a certain diversity of annotation. Whether one more critic accepts or rejects this or that remark about some trait in the *Knight's Tale* is a matter of indifference, but, since Chaucer has been credited or charged with such various purposes, at least a modicum of clarification is in order.

Chaucer always has two familiar rules or purposes in the *Canterbury Tales*: the more important is to tell a good story in accord with the literary climate of the day, and the other to blend it with the temper and prejudices of the given pilgrim-narrator. The successful formula appears again and again; the "verray parfit gentil knyght,"³ of his port as meeke as is a mayde," provides an illustration as authentic as those of the Wife of Bath or the Pardoner.⁴ It is therefore in keeping that,

³ Cf. Muriel Bowden, *Commentary on the General Prologue of the Canterbury Tales* (New York, 1948), pp. 44-49.

⁴ Or of the Man of Law: cf. Bernard I. Duffey, *ELH*, XIV (1947), 193.

in its narrative essentials, the Knight's story shall cleave to the courtly line, the more so perhaps as this tradition is beginning to acquire a substantially antiquarian tinge by the time of Richard II.

Chaucer's repeated tinkering with Boccaccio's *Teseida* reflects his evident attraction to the Italian romance in courtly dress ready-made. While he ignored numerous elements in the plot and reworked the characterizations, it is still true for the *Knight's Tale* that the essential Arcita-Palemone story suited him well and that he was untroubled even by such ineptitudes as Pluto's "furie infernal" (cf. *Teseida*, ed. Roncaglia, p. 259). When Hulbert wonders in after-thought about Chaucer's weariness with *courtoisie*, isn't he qualifying needlessly his own vigorous case that the *Knight's Tale* represents a reconditioning designed for late fourteenth-century tastes?

In *Troilus and Criseyde*, Lewis finds (*Essays and Studies*, loc. cit., pp. 58-59) the "very peculiar literary phenomenon of Chaucer groping back, unknowingly, through the very slightly medieval work of Boccaccio, to the genuinely medieval formula of Chrestien." Later, in the *Allegory of Love* (p. 175) he observes that Chaucer's adaptations from the *Teseida* in the *Parliament of Fowls* involve more omissions and alterations, "all in the mediéval direction." These comments suggest a ready analogue for the *Knight's Tale*.⁵

The *Knight's Tale* makes room for several dilemmas which are typical of courtly debate, but apparently not yet grouped together as such, despite attempts to interpret the poem as

⁵ For examples of mediaevalization, cf. in Robinson's edition the notes to vv. 949, 983, 1024, 1033, 1315, 1347, 1636, 1660, 1761, 1785, 1995 (personified prayers), 2095, 2200, 3089. With respect to courtly formalism, if not necessarily to its allegorical accretions, stress on mediaevalization in Chaucer makes it easy to forget that the *Knight's Tale* and the *Teseida* are separated by less than half a century, and to infer too wide a gap in tenor between the two poems. But such an inference would be the reader's fault, not Lewis's: note, after all, his emphasis on Renaissance traits in Boccaccio. Parenthetically, it might be suggested that Chaucer's so-called "groping" could be traced back beyond Chrétien to Guillaume de Poitiers, with whom as courtly writer and as poet Chaucer has something in common. A graduate student might sharpen his M.A. teeth on a comparative study of the two, to say nothing of a further essay on Criseyde and the heroine of the *Roman de Flamenca*. These parallels become the more inviting as one concentrates on first principles in "Ovid misunderstood" It is not for nothing that Lewis concludes his forty-page chapter on Chaucer with a reminder that "the wild Provençal vine has begun to bear such good fruit that it is now worth taming."

some sort of composite *jeu parti*: (1) The main problem of Emelye's choice between the suitors. (2) "Who hath the worse, Arcite or Palamoun? That oon may seen his lady day by day, But in prison he moot dwelle alway; That oother wher hym list may ride or go, But seen his lady shal he nevere mo" (vv. 1348-1352)? (3) Should "affeccioun of hoolynesse" or "love as to a creature" have precedence? (4) Does the suitor who sees the lady first deserve priority? (5) Is love a "gretter lawe than may be yeve to any erthely man"?

The last four of these points are thrown in only for good measure, and without benefit of Boccaccio, largely to spur along the Palamon-Arcite "debate" at the beginning, and partly perhaps as mediaevalizing coloration. There is no reason to suppose that Chaucer cared who "won" the argument, or that he was more interested than Emelye in taking actual sides. The essential always remains that love has no laws except those of *courtoisie*; subject to his formula, the *Knight's Tale* is suave narration and innocent merriment. With his customary unconcern about plot defects, why should Chaucer trouble himself to revamp Boccaccio any more than he has? Why, for instance, should he abandon the *Teseida* where Palamon prays to Venus and Arcita falls from courtly grace by invoking Mars, an arrangement which after all resolves the story's dilemma as comfortably as it preserves the Knight's consistency with his code? As for his own view of *courtoisie*, Chaucer does not ask to be taken seriously here, any more than when he details the "loveris maladye of Hereos." Although more guarded, Guillaume de Lorris also has a probable tongue in cheek for courtly woes, at least in one similar passage (*Roman de la Rose*, vv. 2535-2556).

The problem of mediaeval levity is still far from solved in French and English literature. For instance, *Guillaume d'Angleterre*, attributed to Chrétien and generally regarded as a pious cross between adventure romance and saintly atonement, tells of an eagle which scoops up the hero's last besant (ed. Wendelin Foerster, vv. 883-887), only to return the holding intact after twenty-four years of non-profit trusteeship (vv. 2849-2854). It is hard to imagine a Chrétien taking this seriously, yet only Gustave Cohen seems to have noticed anything (*Chrétien de Troyes et son oeuvre* [Paris, 1931], p. 105).

Very few scholars have been interested in the lighter side of *Aucassin et Nicolette* (but cf. R. A. Pratt, *PMLA*, loc. cit., p. 617), which likewise awaits detailed investigation in this respect. The obvious question is not the presence or absence of levity, but its amount and intent. The same is, of course, true for Chaucer. Whatever the measure of intended humor in the *Knight's Tale*, it is necessary here to remember only that this element detracts in no way from the *courtois* objective of the poem. After all, fabliaux and goliardics were not the only non-dramatic vehicles for mediaeval wit.

The planets and destinal forces do not affect the *courtoisie* as such any more than the comedy factor. As Manly points out while editing the *Canterbury Tales* (p. 543), Chaucer introduces the gods as a carefully studied motivation for the final demolition of Arcite. It may be recalled that in this he is not only following Boccaccio, but also catering to a favorite interest in his mediaeval audience.

The characterization of Palamon and Arcite is a matter for artistry, over and apart from *courtoisie*, but consistent with it. Their characters and merits make no difference in the outcome of the *Knight's Tale*, but only in the appeal of the narration. Chaucer lets the reader choose between them if he must; but why strain at learned gnats to argue, for example, that they must be equalized? What devotee of *courtoisie*, or what devotee of Chaucer, should object if Palamon can seem self-pitying and sometimes petty, if Arcite seems more the *honnête homme*, if neither one is always intended to seem realistic or even quite bright? Everything they do, except Arcite's choice of Mars, follows the rules.

If Palamon's challenge to Arcite sounds more uncourtly than in the *Teseida*, what of Lionel's still more sudden attack on his ever-perspiring brother Bohort in the thirteenth-century *Queste del saint Graal* (ed. Albert Pauphilet, pp. 188-193)? Only the voice of God could soften Lionel's fury: Bohort, the hermit, and Calogrenant had failed hopelessly. In this romance of *chevalerie célestienne*, Lionel presumably lived by the courtly code; undoubtedly without knowing it, Chaucer had a good precedent. In any case, Palamon's outburst finds no veto among the by-laws of Andreas Capellanus, whose "system" for love is at the moment more relevant to the narrator-

Knight's preoccupations than the chivalric niceties of military combat.

The suggestions in the preceding paragraphs have been prompted by publications which in each case profess that the *Knight's Tale* was written primarily with one among the following objectives: (1) to teach and portray courtly love, (2) to determine the more deserving of two equalized individuals, (3) to resolve the issue of the active versus the contemplative, (4) to write of honor among friends, or, of the conflict between love and friendship, (5) to analyze conflicting passions, (6) to align order, in a semblance of the noble life, against disorder and chaos, (7) to emphasize a tragic view of the universe, (8) to satirize a situation, (9) to set the bower over against the battle-field, (10) to tell a tale *missis ambagibus*. All these objectives cannot prevail singly and at the same time co-exist. Yet from these few marginal notes it should be clear that there is no wish here to disparage the collective opinions quoted at the outset; many of them, as appraisals of actual results in the *Knight's Tale*, are of course perfectly tenable.

There need be no quarrel with the views cited from Lewis, Miss Smith, or Manly. As for Chaucer's specific intention(s), Lewis does not say that the didacticism (*sentence* and *doctryne*) is paramount, but it would be idle to deny that it is a factor in the poet's thought and plan. With reference to Chaucer's primary objective, however, it is impossible to reconcile all the remarks of Hulbert, Miss Hadow, Fairchild, Root, Dodd, Curry, Schofield, Tatlock, Patch, Frost, Muscatine, French, Marckwardt, and Robinson, either among themselves or with the three critics mentioned above. Only these disparities with their varied shadings can excuse the kind of review which I am attempting for the *Knight's Tale* and which is intended as nothing more than a return to Chaucer. But some such return is indispensable if his subtlety as a writer is not to be confused with his ease and directness of essential purpose.

In seeking to explain this, why go beyond the unequivocal verses in the *General Prologue* and in the Host's rejoinder to the Thopas story? Courtly love in the *Knight's Tale* serves both *doctryne* (*sentence*) and *solaas* (*murthe*). At the same time, *murthe* and *solaas* are further enhanced by the narration proper,

together with the levity, the character contrast, destiny and the planets, descriptive features, and so on. Once the Knight's *doctryne*, by way of Palamon's fidelity to *fine amour*, is kept intact, Chaucer seems content to let the reader judge his seriousness about *courtoisie* in practice, as well as about the complementary minor details (courtly and otherwise) throughout the story. In fact, he implies once or twice that he is following "olde stories" and "olde clerkes," almost as if to hint that his public need not be disquieted. Except for its last few stanzas, the purpose of *Troilus and Criseyde* has fortunately never been turned into a problem, yet here, as never in the *Knight's Tale*, Chaucer is at pains to justify himself for the uncourtly betrayal which forms the crux of the story (cf. Book V, vv. 1044, 1050, 1086-1099, 1772-1778). *A fortiori*, then, as Root says (p. 169): "If we are to read the *Knight's Tale* in the spirit in which Chaucer conceived it . . . we must delight in the fair shows of things, and not ask too many questions."

Critics have referred many times to Chaucer's seemingly anxious admonition near the end of the *Troilus* (Book V, vv. 1789-1798):

But litel book, no makyng thow n'envie,
But subgit be to alle poesy;
And kis the steppes, where as thow seest pace
Virgile, Ovide, Omer, Lucan, and Stace. . . .
And red wherso thow be, or elles songe,
That thow be understonde, God I biseche!

High-handed substitution of *Boccace* for *and Stace* would leave metre and rhyme intact. Also, whether textually "falsed" or not, this passage might be added to the *Thopas* retort and to *GenPr* 798 as further solid testimony—because Chaucer's—concerning the manifest and undevious purpose of *Troilus*, and of the *Knight's Tale* as well. Would Chaucer demur?

MANHOOD AND VALOR IN TWO SHAKESPEAREAN TRAGEDIES

By EUGENE M. WAITH

Plutarch, in the opening sentences of his life of Coriolanus, provides a valuable lead for the interpretation of several of Shakespeare's soldier-heroes:

Nowe in those dayes, valliantnes was honoured in ROME above all other vertues: which they called *Virtus*, by the name of vertue selfe, as including in that generall name, all other speciall vertues besides. So that *Virtus* in the Latin, was as muche as valliantnes.¹

The assumption that valor is an all-inclusive virtue, and hence the very emblem of manhood, appears here and there in the literature of all times and leads to the depiction of the courageous soldier as the epitome of the noblest sort of man. Soldiers as different as the Red Cross Knight and Robert Jordan are held up for our admiration because their physical prowess is not only admirable in itself but symbolical of spiritual strength. Since bravery in battle is often closely allied to the most unfeeling cruelty, however, the soldier is often a confusing symbol whose ambivalence is suggested by the following comment on war and peace in Thomas Beard's *The French Academy* (1602), translated from the French of Pierre de la Primaudaye:

For as he is pernicious that mooveth and continueth war onely to subdue his neighbours, to enlarge the borders of his Countrey, and to usurp other mens right, which savoureth more of brutishnesse, than of humanitie: so a long peace bringeth with it many commodities, making men insolent commonly through too great prosperitie, as also nice, lavish, and effeminate, through abundance of wealth and idlenes.²

Thus, the soldier may avoid the danger of effeminacy only to incur the still greater danger of brutishness. Macbeth, as I shall suggest, makes this very error.

Machiavelli's praise of *virtu*, that uncompromising strength of mind and will essential to the successful prince, is a Renais-

¹ *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes*, Tr. Thomas North.

² Beard, *op. cit.*, p. 703.

sance reflection of the Roman attitude noted by Plutarch. To the more conservative contemporaries of Machiavelli such an identification of force and virtue was repugnant, if not actually (along with the rest of his ideas) Satanic. The Machiavellian man, as he was usually conceived in France and England, had so little room in his nature for those virtues which should complement fortitude that his manhood was fatally reduced. One further illustration of the orthodox view is provided by Thomas Milles in a passage of *The Treasure of Auncient and Moderne Times* (1613) in which he objects to the popular degeneration of the concept of "manhood or true valour" (as distinguished from "meere and naked valiancy, or valour"):

There are so many incivilities mingled with our Man-hood, that they sympathize rather with wild Goats, or the heat of Bulles; then with the reall excellencie of humane Nature, which beeing the Image of the Divinitie, figures unto us another kinde of strength and courage, then that which is proper to brute Beasts onely.³

True manhood is a comprehensive ideal, growing out of the familiar Christian concept that man is between the beasts and the angels in the hierarchy of creation. To be worthy of this station a man must show more than the physical valor which characterizes the soldier and traditionally distinguishes the male of the species.

The complex and confusing relationship of valor to manhood in *Macbeth* and in *Antony and Cleopatra* is the subject of this study. In these plays Shakespeare presents the problem directly because, in each case, it confronts the hero, but the full significance of his presentation can best be appreciated by turning first to some of the earlier plays where the problem is adumbrated. The limitations of "meere and naked valiancy" are implied in the treatment of such characters as Richard III and Iago, whose valor is matched only by their villainy. In a far more sympathetic group of characters valor is accompanied by ambition, which is recognized as a sin to which the soldier is peculiarly tempted. Thus Ventidius refers to ambition (with perhaps unconscious irony) as "the soldier's virtue,"⁴ and

³ Milles, *op. cit.*, p. 260.

⁴ *Antony and Cleopatra*, III, i, 22-3. All references to Shakespeare's plays are to the one-volume edition of G. L. Kittredge, Boston, etc., 1936.

even Othello, whose soldierly virtues are never explicitly impugned, is made to say:

Farewell the plumed troop and the big wars
That make ambition virtue! (III, iii, 349-50)

In *Julius Caesar* distrust of the ambitious soldier is again underlined, and a further point is made through the characterization of Brutus, the idealistic revolutionary, for when he has died tragically on his own sword, Antony praises him not only for his lack of personal ambition, but for the gentleness which tempered his courage:

This was the noblest Roman of them all.
All the conspirators save only he
Did that they did in envy of great Caesar;
He, only in a general honest thought
And common good to all, made one of them.
His life was gentle, and the elements
So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world, 'This was a man!' (V, v, 68-75)

The final emphasis falls on the mixture of elements in the character of one who was not merely brave but worthy of that ultimate praise, "This was a man!"

It has not been sufficiently emphasized that Hamlet becomes a prey to a fatal confusion of physical valor with manhood. Early in the play we see that he thinks of his father, "the valiant Hamlet," whose ghost urges him toward bloody revenge, as "a man, take him for all in all" (I. ii, 187). More revealing is Hamlet's equation of conscience and cowardice when he has begun to detest himself for not executing his revenge (III, i, 83). Here moral awareness is treated as effeminacy, and a perverted ideal of manhood begins to take shape. Finally, in the famous soliloquy of Act IV, Scene iv, Hamlet presents inaction as bestial, whereas he associates "godlike reason" with the "divine ambition" of that gloriously active soldier, Fortinbras. What Hamlet admires in him is unreasoning courage, but we should be wary of accepting this Roman identification of valor and virtue. When reason is used to discredit reason and glorify a sort of honor which consists in taking a bloody revenge, we must realize that the hero's conception of manhood has become seriously confused: to be a man means to have thoughts that are bloody or "nothing worth."

In *Macbeth*, more clearly than in *Hamlet*, there is an explicit contrast between two ideals of manhood. Macbeth is a soldier whose valor we hear praised throughout the play. To the "bleeding Sergeant" he is "brave Macbeth," to Duncan "valiant cousin, worthy gentleman"; Ross calls him "Bellona's bridegroom." To be courageous is to be "manly," as the soldier understands that word, and hence at the end of the play, when Macduff reveals the fatal circumstances of his birth, Macbeth says that the news has "cow'd my better part of man," to which Macduff replies, "Then yield thee, coward" (V, viii, 18, 23). After the death of the hero physical valor is given final emphasis in a speech of Ross to Siward:

Your son, my lord, has paid a soldier's debt.
He only liv'd but till he was a man,
The which no sooner had his prowess confirm'd
In the unshrinking station where he fought
But like a man he died. (V, viii, 39-43)

In all these comments there is implied one ideal—the soldier's, or as Plutarch says, the Roman's ideal—of what it is to be a man. Lady Macbeth clearly subscribes to it when she urges her husband to "screw his courage to the sticking place." In her speeches she makes explicit the contrast between the sexes which underlies this concept of manhood. To strengthen her resolve she appeals to the spirits to "unsex me here":

Come to my woman's breasts
And take my milk for gall. . . . (I, v, 48-9)

She fears that Macbeth has too much of the "milk of human kindness," and he himself says to her,

Bring forth men-children only;
For thy undaunted mettle should compose
Nothing but males. (I, vii, 72-4)

Thus not to be a man is to be effeminate.

In this same scene, however, Macbeth introduces another antithesis—that of man and beast. When Lady Macbeth taunts him for his cowardice, he replies,

Who dares do more is none. (I, vii, 46-7)
I dare do all that may become a man.

That Lady Macbeth understands his implication is clear from her scoffing question:

What beast was't then
That made you break this enterprise to me? (I, vii, 47-8)

The important point is that Macbeth's distinction rests, as we can see from his soliloquy at the opening of the scene, upon his awareness of the moral nature of man. His mental torment grows out of the conflict between the narrow concept of man as the courageous male and the more inclusive concept of man as a being whose moral nature distinguishes him from the beasts. The first is that debased ideal of manhood censured by Milles, while the second is the "reall excellencie of humaine Nature" based on "another kinde of strength and courage, then that which is proper to brute Beasts onely."

Shakespeare keeps the two concepts before us throughout the play. The pangs of Macbeth's conscience after the murder (note his inability to say "amen") are no more than effeminate or childish fears to Lady Macbeth (II, ii). In urging his hired assassins to the murder of Banquo, Macbeth echos his wife, contrasting patience and piety with the manhood necessary to perform the bloody deed (III, i). When Banquo's ghost brings on Macbeth's "fit," Lady Macbeth asks him, "Are you a man?" And then:

O, these flaws and starts
(Impostors to true fear) would well become
A woman's story at a winter's fire. . . .
What, quite unmann'd in folly?
(III, iv, 63-5, 73)

Macbeth says, "What man dare I dare" (III, iv, 99).

In the puzzling scene (IV, iii) in which Malcolm tests Macduff, Macbeth's formidable antagonist is established as the exact antithesis of the sort of man Lady Macbeth admires. When Malcolm accuses himself of all Macbeth's sins, Macduff demonstrates his "truth and honor" by his horrified rejection of Malcolm, and thus reveals the moral qualifications of "true" manhood. Then, when Ross tells him of the murders of Lady Macduff and of his children, Macduff appears so overwhelmed

by grief that Malcolm says to him, "Dispute it like a man."⁵ His reply is most significant:

I shall do so;
But I must also feel it as a man.
I cannot but remember such things were
That were most precious to me. Did heaven look on
And would not take their part? Sinful Macduff,
They were all struck for thee! Naught that I am,
Not for their own demerits, but for mine,
Fell slaughter on their souls. (IV, iii, 220-7)

Macduff is a complete man: he is a valiant soldier, ready to perform "manly" deeds, but is neither ashamed of "humane" feelings nor unaware of his moral responsibilities. This combination is emphasized in his next speech, where he shows clearly that his admirable sensibility does not make him womanish:

O, I could play the woman with mine eyes
And braggart with my tongue! But, gentle heavens,
Cut short all intermission. Front to front
Bring thou this fiend of Scotland and myself.
Within my sword's length set him. If he scape,
Heaven forgive him too! (IV, iii, 230-5)

Malcolm's comment is: "This tune goes manly."

The development of Macbeth's character is a triumph for Lady Macbeth's ideal, for conscience is stifled, and Macbeth, like Hamlet, becomes increasingly "bloody, bold and resolute." His deliberate decision, against the dictates of his better judgment, to be a "man" in this narrow sense of the word is one of the most important manifestations of the evil which dominates the entire play: to his subjects Macbeth now seems a devil. Shakespeare's insistence upon this narrowing of character is also a commentary on Macbeth's ambition. In "the swelling act of the imperial theme," the hero becomes fatally diminished. The final stage of the development is revealed in Macbeth's speeches at the time of Lady Macbeth's death. Here we are confronted by the supreme irony that when she dies,

⁵Malcolm's speech is sometimes interpreted to mean "Contend with your sorrow," but since he has just urged Macduff to express his sorrow (ll. 209-10), it seems more likely that he means "Avenge yourself like a man." In both interpretations manliness is equated with courage.

tortured by the conscience she despised, Macbeth is so perfectly hardened, so completely the soldier that she wanted him to be, that he is neither frightened by the "night-shriek" nor greatly moved by the news of her death. Death has no meaning for him, and life is

a tale

Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing. (V, v, 26-8)

Though Macduff's announcement that he was "untimely ripp'd" from his mother's womb causes Macbeth to falter, he dies a courageous soldier, and hence, according to that narrower definition, "like a man." It is appropriate that his death is immediately followed by the last statement of the soldierly standard of values in the tribute Ross pays to Siward's son: "Like a man he died." But on the battlefield is Macduff, who is even more of a man—a soldier who fights only in a good cause, and in whose nature valor is not the sole virtue.

Following the lead of Plutarch, Shakespeare presents Coriolanus as another soldier-hero whose narrow concept of manhood brings on tragedy. Valor he has in abundance, and on the battlefield he is supreme, but he is utterly lacking in the qualities necessary for success in peacetime or those which constitute "the reall excellencie of humaine Nature."⁶ Volumnia's good counsel destroys him because his narrowness and rigidity do not admit of change.

A more complicated version of the problem of valor and manhood is presented in *Antony and Cleopatra*, where a great deal of the richness of the play derives from the conflicting interpretations of Antony's character. Does he fall from his former greatness because of his indulgence in Egyptian revels, or does he rise through Cleopatra's influence to greater heights than those he attained before? Most critics would agree that both interpretations are implicit in the play, but while some emphasize Antony's moral lapse, others seem almost to discount it in their eagerness to show the importance of the values symbolized by Egypt. In determining where the emphasis should fall it is helpful to reconsider Antony's situation with the problems of Shakespeare's other soldier-heroes in mind. Antony is not the

⁶ For an extended treatment of Coriolanus' limitations, see Paul A. Jorgensen, "Shakespeare's Coriolanus, Elizabethan Soldier," *PMLA* XLIV, 221-5.

same sort of soldier as Macbeth or Coriolanus, but the interpretation of the hero's character again rests on an antithesis of a broad and a narrow concept of human nature—in this case on the opposition of Cleopatra's ideal to Caesar's.

At the beginning of the play Antony's great reputation, like Macbeth's, is based on soldierly achievement. But Antony has neglected his duties as a general to devote himself to the love of Cleopatra. By Roman standards his conduct is effeminate, as Caesar makes clear when he says:

From Alexandria
This is the news: he fishes, drinks, and wastes
The lamps of night in revel; is not more man-like
Than Cleopatra, nor the queen of Plotem
More womanly than he. . . . (I, iv, 3-7)

Caesar's reminiscence of the Antony of former times (I, iv, 54-71) glorifies the soldier toughened by hardship and in so doing sets forth Caesar's ideal for Antony. This admiration for masculine courage and scorn for feminine softness recall Lady Macbeth, but since Caesar, unlike her, bases his preference on the conventional disapprobation of excessive passion and failure to exert reasonable control, the audience is apt at this time to accept Caesar's judgment and deplore the influence of the woman who has made a lover of such a fine soldier.

Cleopatra, who enters talking of love, does not accept the antithesis of lover and soldier. Her reference to the "demi-Atlas of this earth, the arm / And burgonet of men" (I, v, 23-4) shows that her ideal for Antony includes, without emphasizing, the virtues of the courageous soldier. He must be this and much else as well, and all to a superlative degree. Her grandiose imagination makes Cleopatra scorn Caesar's conventional censure of excesses which she finds becoming to Antony (as others find her passions and fits becoming to her). Thus the characteristics which adulterate the Antony of Caesar's military ideal serve to round out the heroic figure in the mind of Cleopatra, for whom Antony is not merely a soldier but a "man of men" (I, v, 72).

The fact remains that Cleopatra's opinion of Antony appears eccentric and unsound when compared to Caesar's reasoned objections. Nevertheless, Shakespeare presents Caesar and Antony in such a way as to throw some doubt on the validity

of Caesar's point of view. On the one hand Caesar, the emblem of self-control, appears as a Machiavellian schemer whose clever egotism alienates the sympathy of the audience, while on the other hand Antony's excesses are made more acceptable by their clear relation to his bounty, praised by all, and to his capacity for love—"There's beggary in the love that can be reckon'd" (I, i, 15). In this contrast Caesar shrinks as Antony grows.

The problem of Antony's character is not settled so easily, however, for there are moments in the play in which Antony fails by any standard that can be set up. The fiasco of Actium is such a moment. The Roman appraisal of the situation is given in Canidius' words,

So our leader's led,
And we are women's men. (III, vii, 70-1)

where the antithesis of manliness versus effeminacy is clearly recapitulated. Enobarbus, somewhat later, states it in terms of soldier versus lover:

The itch of his affection should not then
Have nick'd his captainship. . . . (III, xiii, 7-8)

But the nadir of Antony's fortunes is indicated still more certainly in Scarus' comment that Antony's manhood has violated *itself* (III, x, 22-4) and in Antony's abject admissions:

I have fled myself, . . . I have lost command. . . . (III, xi,
7, 23)

Such censure as this cannot be attenuated by attributing it to any special point of view.

Though Antony's failure at this moment is indisputable, one cannot be quite sure that it is entirely due to Cleopatra's "magic." There is no doubt that she gave him bad advice and jeopardized the outcome of the battle by her precipitate departure, but the responsibility for the fatal decision to fight at sea was Antony's, and the chief effort of Cleopatra was to rouse him from inaction. When she chides him for his negligence he replies:

A good rebuke,
Which might have well becom'd the best of men. . . .
(III, vii, 26-7)

Her influence, then, is not exclusively feminizing; here as else-

where in the play her ideal for Antony includes that of the good soldier, and her treatment of Caesar's messenger after the battle of Actium (III, xiii) suggests that Antony's abysmal failure in battle has shaken her faith in him.

The central problem remains the validity of Cleopatra's, as opposed to Caesar's, ideal. Doubtless the most serious charge that could be leveled at Cleopatra is that she causes Antony to go contrary to his true nature, to "flee himself." In this connection one should recall the soothsayer's warning that Antony's demon or spirit is overpowered in the presence of Caesar and comes into its own when Antony is far from Caesar (II, iii). The fortune-teller's insight suggests the possibility that Antony is more himself with Cleopatra than with Caesar. This hint, added to the evidence of Cleopatra's behavior before and after Actium, must lead to the refutation of the charge that she causes Antony to violate his true nature. The truth is more closely approximated by the contrary assumption that Cleopatra's ideal for Antony is what a psychologist would call full self-realization. Such an interpretation is supported by her words to Antony when, after hearing of her cordial reception of Caesar's messenger, he rages at her, sends the messenger to be whipped, and promises to fight again:

That's my brave lord! . . .

. . . since my lord

Is Antony again, I will be Cleopatra. (III, xiii, 176, 186-7)

The incident is a good illustration of the paradox of Antony's character. Here is the Antony of excesses which neither Caesar nor the average Elizabethan could condone, which yet mark for the spectator, as for Cleopatra, the essential vitality of the man. They are as much a part of him as his impulsive generosity, to which they form a logical complement. They are neither wholly good nor wholly bad. Thus the Antony of Caesar's imagination, the successful general who has reasonably eliminated from his life his Egyptian revels, is an impossibility, as Cleopatra is well aware. To say this is not to justify Antony's actions but to suggest that his tragic flaw is not precisely sensuality nor effeminacy but a lack of judgment the consequences of which are his downfall and his greatest triumph.

No attentive reader of *Antony and Cleopatra* has missed the

persistent images of greatness associated with the character of Antony. Toward the end of the play the greatness of his sensual excesses gives way to increasingly dramatic examples of greatness of mind. Now magnanimity was regarded as one of the supreme virtues a man might possess, and if we turn again to *The French Academy* we see that magnanimity was considered the ideal accompaniment of valor:

Although the vertue of *Fortitude* bee never perfected without Magnanimitie (which is as much to say, as Generositie or nobleness of hart) as that which undoubtedly is comprehended under the first part of *Fortitude*, which *Cicero* calleth Magnificence, or a doing of great and excellent things, yet notwithstanding it seemeth that this word *Magnanimitie* carrieth with it some greater and more particular Emphasis. . . .⁷

The phrase "noblenes of hart" could well be applied to Antony, as could several sections of the following passage, in which a further definition of magnanimity is attempted:

Now concluding our present discourse, we learne that true and perfect Magnanimitie and Generositie is invincible and inexpugnable, bicause upon this consideration, that death is the common ende of mans life, and that happy passage to life everlasting, she despiseth it altogether, and maketh lesse account thereof than of bondage and vice: sustaining also with a great and unappalled hart, most cruell torments, not being mooved thereby to do any thing that may seeme to proceede of the common weakenes and frailtie of man nature. Further we learne that this vertue maketh him that possesseth hir, good, gentle, and curteous, even towards his greatest enemies, against whom it suffreth him not to use any covin or malice, but keepeth him alwaies within the limits of equitie and justice: causing him further to make choice of and to finish all honest matters of his own will, and for their love, not caring at all for mortall and corruptible things, that hee may wholie apprehend and take hold of those things that are divine and eternall.⁸

Only in the last two acts of the play does Antony fully become what Cleopatra has always known he might be. The difference between her insight and the world's miscomprehension is underlined in her greeting:

O infinite virtue, com'st thou smiling from
The world's great snare uncaught? (IV, viii, 17-8)

⁷ Beard, *op. cit.*, p. 273.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 282.

Magnanimity, or "noblenes of hart," obliterates the antithesis of soldier and lover, for the death of Antony is a powerful testimony not only to the greatness of his love for Cleopatra, but also to his great courage:

. . . that self hand
Which writ his honour in the acts it did
Hath, with the courage which the heart did lend it,
Splitted the heart. (V, i, 21-4)

So far is this final action from weakness or effeminacy, that it inspires Cleopatra to put aside womanish fears ("My resolution's plac'd, and I have nothing / Of woman in me" V, ii, 237-8) and die "after the high Roman fashion." In the poetry of her dying speeches there is a magnificent synthesis of the exalted love and courage which both hero and heroine finally achieve. Antony is influenced as strongly as is Macbeth (though with radically different results) by the ideal of the woman he loves. It remains to suggest that Cleopatra's ideal is far more inclusive than Caesar's, and inspires Antony to attain the "reall excellencie of humaine nature, which beeing the Image of the Divinitie, figures unto us another kinde of strength and courage, then that which is proper to brute Beasts onely."

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JOSEPH HALL AND JOHN MILTON

By AUDREY CHEW

When John Milton was engaged in pamphlet controversy, he was neither restrained in his language nor genteel about mud slinging. Bishop Joseph Hall was one victim against whom he carried out his threat to send "home his haughtinesse well bespurted with his owne holy-water." The controversy began when Milton attacked Hall for his pamphlet *Episcopacy by Divine Right*, a pamphlet defending the Church of England position against the attacks of Smectymnuus. It was a semi-official pamphlet which had been read and approved by Laud. Milton went to the defense of his friends with his *Animadversions upon the Remonstrants Defence, against Smectymnuus* and, later, *An Apology against a Pamphlet call'd A Modest Confutation of the Animadversions of the Remonstrant against Smectymnuus*. Doing everything he could to defame Hall's character, he was forced, as a result, to defend his own; and it is more than amusing to hear these two grave gentlemen each accusing the other of spending his afternoons in the bordello.

Milton attacked Hall from every angle that seemed to offer any opportunity for criticism or ridicule. As a theologian, he attacked his arguments. As a man, he attacked his morals. As a fellow writer, he ridiculed at length his prose style, his toothless satires, and his imaginary voyage, the *Mundus Alter et Idem*. In spite of all their quarrelling, however, the non-political attitudes of the two men—looked at separately and dispassionately—often seem to the modern reader as much alike as different. They were, after all, products of the same time—though Hall was thirty-four years older than Milton and, correspondingly, more conservative. To compare their opinions about the same or similar subjects is often to find that they thought the same things, or to discover that Hall the Anglican could be more strait-laced than Milton the Puritan, or to realize that an opinion of Milton's which displeases us was really the conventional attitude of the age.

Hall is helpful as someone whose ideas can be used to measure the originality of Milton's thinking because Hall was not a

particularly original thinker; his strong point was his ability to express what other people liked to hear. Again and again his opinions turn out to be merely those of the moderate Protestant group to which he belonged. He was sympathetic with many of the opinions that we tend to classify as Puritan—though often they belong merely to the general Christian tradition. A comparison of some of the ideas on which he and Milton both expressed opinions can, therefore, highlight the extent to which an educated and urbane—even though radical—Puritan might truly differ from a moderate Anglican. The first two sections of the paper will deal mainly with likenesses, the third section with differences.

1

It was in their ideas of personal conduct that Hall and Milton most nearly agreed; and when they differed, it was often the Anglican who was more puritanical than the Puritan. Each of them, because of his chosen profession—Hall as a minister, Milton as a poet—set up for himself a much stricter standard of behavior than the ordinary Christian would have considered necessary. But in general they both agreed in espousing the Christian-Classical Renaissance code of conduct (sometimes called puritanical) which can be found in Spenser and in many another sixteenth-century moralist. In general, for instance, they agreed with what Spenser had said about the necessity of temperance in the indulgence of passion or pleasure—yet Hall was slightly closer than Milton to the rigidity of Spenser.¹ Though Hall talked much about the necessity of preserving “an even disposition of the heart,” asking, “indeed, wherein stands the use of wisdom, if not in tempering our pleasures and sorrows?” his word *tempering* often meant controlling more than it meant searching for the golden mean. He felt safest about his passions when he could so “hold them down and keep them bare, that their very

¹ For discussions of Spenser's views see Viola B. Hulbert, “A Possible Christian Source for Spenser's Temperance,” *SP*, XXVIII (1931), 184-210; H. S. V. Jones, “The Faerie Queene and the Mediaeval Aristotelian Tradition,” *JEGP*, XXV (1926), 283-298; F. H. Padelford, “The Virtue of Temperance in the Faerie Queene,” *SP*, XVIII (1921), 334-46.

impotency and remissness shall afford me security.”² Milton, more Aristotelian, less fearful of emotion, considered that the appropriate amount of passionate reaction to any given situation should depend on the stimulus. The degree of love should depend on the intrinsic worth of the object and similarly the degree of hate on the intrinsic hatefulness. “In the proper regulation of hope and fear, the cause, the object, and the degree of excitation are chiefly to be considered.”³ When it came to the passion of anger, however, both men agreed. Anger, on occasion, might be a laudable passion. Using St. Paul as his authority, Hall said that “if a man can be so cool, as, without any inward commotion to suffer God’s honour to be trod in the dust, he shall find God justly angry with him for his want of anger.”⁴ Hall stipulated, however, that anger be not too long, nor “too intense and vehement while it lasts.”⁵ Milton writes that “in anger, we are to consider the motive for the passion, its degree, and duration.”⁶ Their agreement that anger might occasionally be required not necessarily includes an agreement about the specific occasion of anger, for in one of his attacks on Hall Milton states that “true and lively zeale is customably disparag’d with the terme of indiscretion, bitternesse, and choler.”⁷

Pleasure, like passion, is to be indulged temperately; for Hall and Milton both followed the standard Protestant teaching⁸ that total abstinence from pleasure, fleshly or otherwise, was as contrary to God’s desire as over-indulgence. Hall, in his dislike of any form of extremism—whether Catholic or Brownist—discourses at large in an academic defense of pleasure.⁹ Milton, too, pointed out that Heaven

disapproves that care, though wise in show,
That with superfluous burden loads the day,
And when God sends a cheerful hour, refrains.¹⁰

² *The Works of Joseph Hall*, ed. Philip Wynter (Oxford, 1863), VI, 4, 216; VII, 457, 541-2.

³ *Christian Doctrine*, *Columbia Milton*, XVII, 203, 207.

⁴ *Works*, VI, 437.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 438, 440.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 209.

⁷ *An Apology against Smectymnuus*, *Columbia Milton*, III, 281-2.

⁸ See M. M. Knappen, *Tudor Puritanism* (Chicago, 1939), pp. 427-8, 437.

⁹ See *Works*, I, 14; II, 506; V, 135, 389; VI, 216-18, 390-400.

¹⁰ Sonnet XXI. See also *Paradise Lost*, IX, 235-43.

"No mortall nature," he said, "can endure either in the actions of Religion, or study of wisdom, without sometime slackning the cords of intense thought and labour: which lest we should think faulty, God himself conceals us not his own recreations before the world was built."¹¹ Even education was in part "to be won from pleasure it self abroad; In those vernal seasons of the year, when the air is calm and pleasant, it were an injury and sullenness against nature not to go out and see her riches, and partake in her rejoycing with Heaven and Earth."¹² All of this, of course, presumed that pleasure was being treated as a recreation only, not as an end in itself. Though pleasures, Hall said, were "meet relaxations to a mind over bent, and a body tired with honest and holy employments," yet the true Christian "hates to turn pastime into trade; not abiding to spend more time in whetting than till his edge be sharp."¹³ God "hath indulged to us a lawful freedom, not a wild licentiousness."¹⁴ As Milton put it, the proper attitude was that of one who "of those delights can judge, and spare to interpose them oft."¹⁵

Though Milton and Hall agreed on the principle of the golden mean in the indulgence of pleasure, Milton, the Puritan, actually looked more kindly on the pleasures of sense than did Hall, the Anglican. Though neither would ever have approved of rolling "with pleasure in a sensual stie," the suspicious eye with which the lady in *Comus* regarded all pleasure is usually more characteristic of Hall than of Milton. Hall was afraid of the dangers of pleasure and could not help feeling that a little of what he considered to be Catholic austerity might not be a bad idea.¹⁶ He warns his readers constantly against the sorceress pleasure who might turn men into swine.¹⁷ In this "spiritual warfare of ours," he said, "we must not only stir up our courage and endeavours to resist and vanquish temptations, but we must bend our utmost care upon the prevention and removal of

¹¹ *Tetrachordon*, Columbia Milton, IV, 85.

¹² *Of Education*, Columbia Milton, IV, 290. •

¹³ *Works*, VI, 407-8; VII, 168, 596.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, VI, 401-3, 406-7, 411; VII, 458.

¹⁵ Sonnet XX. See also *The Reason of Church Government*, Columbia Milton, III, 239-40.

¹⁶ *Works*, V, 11, 385-6, 387.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, V, 36, 154, 206, 312, 626, 681; VI, 30-2, 178-9, 412-3; VII, 9; X, 149.

whatsoever in our apparel, carriage, diet, recreations " may give assistance to the enemy.¹⁸ Where food was concerned he warned against over-indulgence either in quantity or in quality. He regarded feasting as a danger both to the body and to the soul.¹⁹ He bemoaned the " vain Apician-like gluttony " of those who forgot that " the end of food is to sustain nature " and indulged themselves in " that curiosity of mixture, whereby not the eye and the palate, but the scent also must be feasted." ²⁰ Milton, on the other hand, was much less stern. Though he too insisted on due nourishment, not gluttonous delight," ²¹ agreeing that nature did not intend men to be " riotous with her abundance," part of his objection was based on the consideration that rioting by the privileged few would result in want for the many.²² He was not, like Hall, afraid of enjoying the taste of his food. He had Eve prepare her lunch for Raphael with care

What choice to chuse for delicacie best,
What order, so contriv'd so not to mix
Tastes, not well Joynd, inelegant, but bring
Taste after taste upheld with kindest change.²³

Milton himself, when inviting Lawrence to supper, pleasantly anticipated,

What neat repast shall feast us, light and choice,
Of Attick tast, with Wine, whence we may rise
To hear the Lute well toucht, or artfull voice
Warble immortal Notes and *Tuscan* Ayre? ²⁴

Neither Hall nor Milton objected to wine in moderate quantity. Hall, in fact, defends its use at length, but both men were agreed in condemning excessive drinking.²⁵

Milton's somewhat less stringent attitude toward pleasure is again revealed on the subject of the stage. Hall, who sneered at " idle and scurrilous playbooks," had little use for the theatre,

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, V, 546.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, II, 459, 534; VI, 282, 389, 567; VII, 169-70; X, 159-60.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, II, 459; V, 208, 345-6; VI, 405; IX, 556; X, 419, 423-4.

²¹ *Paradise Lost*, XI, 530-4.

²² See *Comus*, lines 761-78.

²³ *Paradise Lost*, V, 333-6

²⁴ Sonnet XX.

²⁵ See Hall, *Works*, I, 259; II, 255; V, 11, 344, 377; VI, 588; Milton, *Tetrachordon*, *Columbia Milton*, IV, 132.

certainly not for the contemporary theatre,²⁶ but Milton—though he admitted that “the corrupting influence of the theater ought to be eliminated,”—used the dramatic form for the expression of some of his most serious ideas, prefacing his play with a vindication of tragedy in general “from the small esteem, or rather infamy, which in the account of many it undergoes at this day.” Moreover, he indicated in his *Commonplace Book* that his approval of plays extended to their production on the stage, saying,

It does not follow that it is necessary to abolish altogether the performance of plays. This on the contrary would be quite senseless; for what in the whole of philosophy is more impressive, purer, or more uplifting than a noble tragedy, what more helpful to a survey at a single glance of the hazards and changes of human life? ²⁷

Where the pleasures of love were concerned, both men's statements were pretty much in line with standard Protestant-Puritan doctrine.²⁸ Though they condemned the excesses of lechery and voluptuousness,²⁹ they would not allow virginity to be considered a higher state than matrimony³⁰ so long as the rule of temperance was observed. Hall said: “Meats are for the preservation of man; marriage acts for the preservation of mankind: neither of them without some carnal delight; which yet, if by the bridle of temperance it be held to the proper and natural use, cannot be termed lust.”³¹ Milton's attitude is, of course, similar.

In general the two men agreed in their blanket condemnation of luxury and self-indulgence. When reflecting on the lessons of history, Hall remarked,

²⁶ *Works*, V, 10.

²⁷ *Columbia Milton*, XVIII, 207

²⁸ See C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* (London, 1936); William Haller, “Hail Wedded Love,” *ELH*, XIII (1946), 79-97; and William and Malleville Haller, “The Puirtan Art of Love,” *Huntington Library Quarterly*, V (1941-42), 235-72.

²⁹ See Hall, *Works*, I, 540, II, 551; III, 264; VI, 402; Milton, *An Apology against Smectymnuus*, *Columbia Milton*, III, 306; *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, *op. cit.*, III, 370; *Of Reformation in England*, *op. cit.*, III, 52-3.

³⁰ See Hall, *Works*, I, 257; II, 218, 301; VI, 395; Milton, *Paradise Lost*, IV, 741-75; *History of Britam*, *Columbia Milton*, X, 173-4, 306; *Christian Doctrine*, *op. cit.*, XVII, 217.

³¹ *Works*, VI, 275-6, 410, 414-5.

That which the historian observed in the course of the world, that abundance begets delicacy and animosity; that again, quarrels, and vastation and war; and from thence grows poverty; is no less true in the particular state of the soul. If we be rich and high fed, we grow wanton and stomachful, and apt to make war with Heaven, till we be taken down again with affliction.³²

It is the same observation that Michael made to Adam when he showed him a preview of the degenerate future:

Those whom last thou sawst
In triumph and luxurious wealth, are they
First seen in acts of prowess eminent
And great exploits, but of true vertu void;
Who having spilt much blood, and don much waste
Subduing Nations, and achievd thereby
Fame in the World, high titles, and rich prey,
Shall change thir course to pleasure, ease, and sloth,
Surfet, and lust, till wantonness and pride
Raise out of friendship hostil deeds in Peace.
The conquerd also, and enslav'd by Warr
Shall with thir freedom lost all vertu loose
And fear of God, from whom thir pietie feign'd
In sharp contest of Battle found no aide
Against invaders; therefore coold in zeale
Thenceforth shall practice how to live secure,
Worldlie or dissolute, on what thir Lords
Shall leave them to enjoy; for th'earth shall bear
More than anough, that temperance may be tri'd:
So all shall turn degenerate, all deprav'd,
Justice and Temperance, Truth and Faith forgot.³³

In addition to their condemnation of luxury, both men felt that there was a certain spiritual value in affliction. As a trial sent from God it should be borne with patience. Hall said: "Crosses, unjustly termed evils, as they are sent of him that is all goodness; so they are sent for good, and his end cannot be frustrate."³⁴ Milton said:

Who best
Can suffer, best can do; best reign, who first
Hath well obey'd.³⁵

³² *Ibid.*, VI, 367, 413; VIII, 76.

³³ *Paradise Lost*, XI, 787-807. See also *The First Defence of the English People*, *Columbia Milton*, VII, 285-7.

³⁴ *Works*, VI, 20. See also *Ibid.*, I, 108, 113; II, 327; III, 304; V, 642-3; VI, 20, 39-40, 96-8, 573-4, 586; VII, 7-8, 216, 473-4, 575-6.

³⁵ *Paradise Regained*, III, 194-6.

In addition to agreeing on the necessity of tempering their passions and their pleasures, both men agreed with general Protestant teaching that it is the Christian's duty to live in the world, not to withdraw to the desert. Each one could, on occasion, sing the praises of solitude.³⁶ But their usual attitude was conveyed by Milton's expressed hatred of a fugitive and cloistered virtue and by Hall's statement that "to sequester ourselves from the company of the world, that we may depart from their vices, proceeds from a base and distrusting mind."³⁷ Both felt it their duty, as spiritual leaders, to communicate to the rest of society the results of their own meditations. Hall said:

Though it be most easy and safe for a man, with the Psalmist, to commune with his own heart in silence; yet it is more behoveful to the common good, for which, both as men and Christians, we are ordained, that those thoughts, which our experience hath found comfortable and fruitful to ourselves, should, with neglect of all censures, be communicated to others. The concealment whereof, methinks, can proceed from no other ground but either timorousness or envy.³⁸

Milton would jump in even more forcefully, saying, "I could not to my thinking honor a good cause more from the heart, then by defending it earnestly, as oft as I could judge it to behoove me, notwithstanding any false name that could be invented to wrong, or undervalue an honest meaning."³⁹

2

In general, Hall and Milton concurred in their notions of personal conduct; they also agreed, more than one might expect, in their opinions about wives and children. The answer is, of course, that they were both reflecting fairly standard Protestant opinion. Sometimes it is stated that Milton's low valuation of women resulted largely from his personal experience; but Hall, if one dare believe his own statements, had a long and happy married life, and yet he held many of the same views. Milton

³⁶ See Hall, *Works*, II, 422; X, 150-1; Milton, *Comus*, lines 372-84.

³⁷ *Works*, VII, 516. Cf. *Ibid.*, II, 341, 393; VI, 283; and Edwin Greenlaw, "A Better Teacher than Aquinas," *SP*, XIV (1917), 196-217.

³⁸ *Works*, VII, 486.

³⁹ *An Apology against Smectymnuus*, *Columbia Milton*, III, 281-2.

is sometimes blamed by the modern reader for his failure to idealize women. Perhaps we idealize him too much and hope that since he was modern in so many of his opinions he should have been ahead of his time in this one too. He was not, though he was somewhat better than average. Since tradition had already placed him in the dominant male position, there was no particular reason why he should want to introduce equality into the domestic scene. As a religious person he quite likely considered the courtly love tradition immoral, for he speaks scornfully of

Serenate, which the starv'd Lover sings
To his proud fair, best quitted with disdain.⁴⁰

Both Milton and Hall agreed that except under very unusual circumstances a man had a right to rule in his own home and to expect perfect, unquestioning obedience. Both he and Hall commented on the story of Vashti (whose crime had been—like Bianca's in *The Taming of the Shrew*—to refuse to come when called). Shakespeare's Kate had preached:

Such duty as the subject owes the prince
Even such a woman oweth to her husband;
And when she is forward, peevish, sullen, sour,
And not obedient to his honest will,
What is she but a foul contending rebel,
And graceless traitor to her loving lord? ⁴¹

In a similar manner Hall said of Vashti:

It is not for a good wife to judge of her husband's will but to execute it. Neither wit nor stomach may carry her into a curious inquisition, into the reasons of an enjoined charge, much less to a resistance; but in a hoodwinked simplicity she must follow whither she is led, as one that holds her chief praise to consist in subjection.⁴²

Milton agreed, saying,

The same Spirit relates to us the cours which the *Medes* and *Persians* took by occasion of *Vashti*, whose meer denial to come at her husbands sending lost her the being Queen any longer, and set up a wholsom law, *that every man should beare rule in his own house*. And the divine relater shows us not the least signe of disliking what was done; how should he? ⁴³

⁴⁰ *Paradise Lost*, IV, 769-70.

⁴¹ V, ii, 155-60.

⁴² *Works*, II, 256-7. See also *Ibid.*, p. 602, V, 543.

⁴³ *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, *Columbia Milton*, III, 475-6. See also

Both conceded that in unusual cases there might be exceptions to this rule of inferiority—in those rare instances in which the wife exceeded “her husband in prudence and dexterity, and he contentedly yeeld, for then a superior and more naturall law comes in, that the wiser should govern the lesse wise, whether male or female.”⁴⁴ This is Milton. Hall says: “Surely the soul acknowledgeth no sex, neither is varied according to the outward frame. How oft have we known female hearts in the breasts of men; and contrarily, manly powers in the weaker vessels! It is injurious to measure the act by the person, and not rather to esteem the person for the act.”⁴⁵ Such instances of true superiority were, however, rare. Generally when women were to be found taking on men’s duties they had usurped them. In his description of the country of Viraginia in his *Mundus Alter et Idem* Hall satirized such an upsetting of the proper order.⁴⁶ Milton in the *History of Britain* spoke only scornfully of men who permitted themselves to be ruled by women.⁴⁷

Husbands were to be rulers, however, not tyrants. Both Hall and Milton followed liberal Protestant teaching in their insistence that wives and children be handled with consideration, not treated like servants. The husband, said Hall, should make “a wise use of his just inequality; so remembering himself to be the superior, as that he can be no other than one flesh.”⁴⁸ “Man is not to hold her as a servant,” said Milton, “but receives her into a part of that empire which God proclaims him to, though not equally, yet largely, as his own image and glory: for it is no small glory to him, that a creature so like

Tetrachordon, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-7, and the *Christian Doctrine*, *Columbia Milton*, XV, 121.

⁴⁴ *Tetrachordon*, *Columbia Milton*, pp. 76-7.

⁴⁵ *Works*, I, 497. Cf. *Ibid.*, II, 218.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, X, 448

⁴⁷ *Columbia Milton*, X, 60, 62, 67-8. Both men were reflecting the general Protestant point of view. See F. M. Padelford, “The Women in Spenser’s Allegory of Love,” *JEGP*, XVI (1917), 80-1; James E. Phillips, Jr., “The Woman Ruler in Spenser’s ‘Faerie Queene.’” *Huntington Library Quarterly*, V (1941-2), 233-4, and “The Background of Spenser’s Attitude Toward Woman Rulers,” *op. cit.*, pp. 31-2; C. L. Powell, *English Domestic Relations, 1487-1653* (New York, 1917), p. 147; and Edward S. Le Comte, “Milton’s Attitude Towards Women in the *History of Britain*,” *PMLA*, LXII (1947), 977-83.

⁴⁸ *Works*, VII, 172. See also *Ibid.*, I, 260-1, 316; III, 90; V, 538-9; Knappen, *Tudor Puritanism*, pp. 453-5; and Louis B. Wright, *Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England* (Chapel Hill, 1935), pp. 205-6, 208-9, 226-7.

him, should be made subject to him.”⁴⁹ It was similar in the case of children. Though Hall considered disobedience in a child a “foul and unnatural” sin,⁵⁰ he urged parents not to be unreasonable in their demands, not to force children into distasteful marriages.⁵¹ Milton went even one step farther, saying,

As for the custome that some parents and guardians have of forcing mariages, it will be better to say nothing of such a savage inhumanity, but only thus, that the Law which gives not all freedom of divorce to any creature undu'd with reason so assassinated is next in cruelty.⁵²

On the question of divorce it could not be expected that the conservative Hall should take so advanced a position as Milton. Though he agreed with current liberal doctrine that marriage should be grounded on liking as well as on economic and social considerations, saying that choice should be made not by “weight, or by the voice, or by the hue of the hide, but for pure affection grounded upon virtue,”⁵³ he still could not condone the idea of divorce granted purely because of incompatibility. He is horrified by Milton’s recommendation of this ground for separation: “Woe is me! to what a pass is the world come, that a Christian pretending to reformation, should dare to tender so loose a project to the public!”⁵⁴ Nonetheless, he was somewhat closer to the general Puritan point of view on divorce—which was somewhat more liberal than the Anglican—than he was to the strict orthodox Anglican position. For he thought that divorce and remarriage should be permitted on the grounds of desertion, as well as on those of adultery.⁵⁵

3

Though Hall and Milton agreed on many points, it has not been my intention to imply that they had not very real grounds

⁴⁹ *Tetrachordon*, *Columbia Milton*, IV, 76.

⁵⁰ *Works*, I, 492. See also *Ibid.*, p. 304; II, 450-1.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, I, 264-5, 406, VII, 367, 370, 380-82. Cf. Haller, “Hail Wedded Love,” p. 84; “The Puritan Art of Love,” pp. 255-6; and Wright, *Middle Class Culture in Elizabethan England*, pp. 205-6, 208-9.

⁵² *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, *Columbia Milton*, III, 422.

⁵³ *Works*, VII, 172.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, VII, 371. See also *Ibid.*, I, 271; III, 94-5; IV, 167; V, 632-3; VII, 371.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, VII, 375-8. Cf. Powell, *English Domestic Relations*, pp. 86-7.

for disagreement; I have merely been trying to indicate that the differences between a Puritan and an Anglican (an Anglican whose opinions were sufficiently orthodox for him to have been chosen the semi-official defender of episcopacy) were not differences about manners and morals. A courtier and a Puritan tradesman, I think, might have differed about such matters, not two strict-thinking men who took seriously their Renaissance education in the ideals of conduct. Their real differences resulted partly from their disparate temperaments, partly from a clash of opinion about the relation of the individual to the system. It is entirely likely that Milton would have launched into an attack on the character of any opponent in a controversy. It is also possible that Hall annoyed him in particular because Hall was not a particularly black example of an Episcopal bishop. Had he been actually guilty of the moral depravity of which Milton accused him, his arguments would have been much easier to confute by Milton's vilifying method.

Hall had in his youth been a potential Puritan. His sympathies lay in that direction, his college at Cambridge had been the mother of many Puritan leaders; even as a bishop he occasionally got into trouble with Laud for being too tolerant of Puritan preachers in his diocese. He had never, however, been the schismatic sort of Puritan; and with age and promotion he had become increasingly conservative. Milton objects that though Hall "would seem not to have joyn'd with the worst," he yet kept "alooff off from that which is best." He himself, he said, agreed with Savanarola, who complained "that while hee endeavour'd to reforme the Church, his greatest enemies were still these Lukewarm ones."⁵⁶ It was his belief "that feare and dull disposition, lukewarmenesse & sloth are not seldomer wont to cloak themselves under the affected name of moderation, then true and lively zeale is customably disparg'd with the terme of indiscretion, bitterness, and choler."⁵⁷ For it was not so much that Hall was an Anglican bishop that annoyed Milton as the fact that he tried to sit on the fence. "I am, and profess to be," Hall said, "as the terms stand, on neither; and yet of both parts: I am for the peace of both, for the

⁵⁶ *Animadversions upon the Remonstrants Defence*, *Columbia Milton*, III, 125.

⁵⁷ *An Apology for Smectymnuus*, *Columbia Milton*, p. 281.

humor of neither. How should the mortar or cement join the stones together if it did not lie between both? "If only everyone else could be like-minded, "we should not have such libellous presses, such unquiet pulpits, such distracted bosoms." ⁵⁸

Even if the two men had agreed perfectly about the end to be reached, they would still have quarreled about the means. Hall would have wanted to change things slowly, to preserve old institutions in hopes that they would cleanse themselves of impurities. Milton tended to prefer the clean sweep and the new start. Hall's purely literary work was mainly satirical, an attempt to make men turn from their new-fangled follies to the virtuous ways of their fathers. Milton could see no virtue in Hall's satires, believing that he attacked the wrong people, complaining that he aimed his blows too low. Hall tried to preach the virtue of being content with what you have and who you are. Milton—when attacking Hall, at any rate—gave the impression that bishops and kings were the only proper objects of satire.

The fundamental difference between the two men can be seen clearly in their attitude toward free inquiry. Milton was much more willing than Hall to let men expose themselves to dangerous ideas. Hall did not trust the average man to discriminate, either about religious ideas or about political ones. He himself was not one who believed that essential truth was complicated. From his point of view the truths necessary to salvation were "neither many nor obscure." Any occasional puzzling over abstruse questions which had to be done should be left to "professors and licentiates in divinity" ⁵⁹ The presumption of "ignorent and unlettered men" who had taken it upon themselves to interpret "the most obscure scriptures" was resulting in "infinite mischief." ⁶⁰ Even scholars should beware of engendering strife in their quibbles over hidden and minor details, lest this itch should "end in a smart." ⁶¹ Not only was it dangerous to the public peace for the man in the street to concern himself with problems above his understanding, such meddling might be perilous to that man's soul. By reading

⁵⁸ *Works*, V, 517.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, VI, 628, 630.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, VII, 589-90. See also *Ibid.*, II, 323; V, 318; VI, 515; VII, 471-2, 634-5.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, V, 202-3. See also *Ibid.*, VI, 455, 620.

Popish books and the like before learning to recognize propaganda, many had "taken poison ere they know what milk is." It might even be wise, Hall thought, to take a leaf from these Popish books and forbid the sale and even the sight of such infectious authors.⁶² He wished there might be "a general interdiction of this lawless licentiousness of the press," confining it "to none but necessary, safe and orthodox discourse."⁶³ More than anything else he longed for peace, begging his contemporaries, "For God's sake, for the Church's sake, for our own souls' sake, let us all compose ourselves to peace and love."⁶⁴

Milton termed such an attitude "feare and dull disposition, lukewarmnesse & sloth." Though he had no more real faith than Hall in the intellect of the unlearned vulgar, he opposed censorship because he feared its result would place obstacles in the way of "such as evidently were born to study, and love learning for it self."⁶⁵ Even though Milton's opposition to official censorship did not go so far as to make him lift all barriers to human inquiry,⁶⁶ he still preferred to leave the individual free to make his own mistakes. Of those "who perpetually complain of schisms and sects, and make it such a calamity that any man dissents from their maxims," he said, "'Tis their own pride and ignorance which causes the disturbing who neither will hear with meaknes, nor can convince, yet all must be supprest which is not found in their Syntagma. They are the troublers, they are the dividers of unity, who neglect and permit not others to unite those dissever'd peeces which are yet wanting to the body of truth."⁶⁷

These differences between Hall and Milton over the question of who should be allowed freedom to search for truth can be explained partly as politics. Hall was defending a system which had to be supported by a belief in authority. Milton was

⁶² *Ibid.*, V, 11-12.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, VI, 644-6.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, V, 15, 132.

⁶⁵ *Areopagitica*, *Columbia Milton*, IV, 323-4.

⁶⁶ Raphael will only satisfy Adam's desire for "knowledge within bounds" warning him to temper his desire for information as he would his desire for food (*Paradise Lost*, VII, 115-30). Michael tells him that the sum of knowledge is to learn to obey the will of God (*Ibid.*, XII, 577-87). Christ belittles Classical learning (*Paradise Regained*, IV, 288-330).

⁶⁷ *Areopagitica*, *Columbia Milton*, IV, 323-4.

attacking that system. In the main Hall was talking about truth as it related to church government. When the question was simply of truth in a vague general sense, he could, on occasion, sound as idealistic as Milton. We remember Milton's description of truth as she

came once into the world with her divine Master, and was a perfect shape most glorious to look on: but when he ascended, and his Apostles after him were laid asleep, then strait arose a wicked race of deceivers, who as that story goes of the *Ægyptian Typhon* with his conspirators, how they dealt with the good *Osiris*, took the virgin Truth, hew'd her lovely form into a thousand peeces, and scatter'd them to the four winds. From that time ever since, the sad friends of Truth, such as durst appear, imitating the careful search that *Isis* made for the mangled body of *Osiris*, went up and down gathering up limb by limb still as they could find them.⁶⁸

And we may be surprised to find Hall using a similar figure:

Truth oftentimes must be fetched by piecemeal out of divers branches of contrary opinions. For it falls out not seldom, that truth is, through ignorance or rash vehemency, scattered into sundry parts, and like to a little silver melted amongst the ruins of a burnt house must be tried out from heaps of much superfluous ashes.⁶⁹

Nor was Hall, any more than Milton, one to disparage learning. He mentions, rather, the disrepute into which it had fallen in degenerate modern times.⁷⁰ "The slothful worldling will rather take up a falsehood for truth," he said, "than beat his brain to discern truth from falsehood."⁷¹

Both Milton and Hall were agreed, likewise, in the limits they assigned to the search for truth. Both accepted the standard Puritan teaching⁷² that not knowledge for its own sake but knowledge as it led to the attainment of virtue should be the end. Adam's sin, so Hall said, was not his desire for knowledge, for an increased knowledge of the world, which aimed at an increased appreciation of the workmanship of God, was a wholly admirable thing.⁷³ Adam sinned in desiring speculative

⁶⁸ *Op. cit.*, pp. 337-8.

⁶⁹ *Works*, VII, 531. See also *Ibid.*, V, 176-7.

⁷⁰ See *Works*, VIII, 143; IV, 537-8; *Virgilemiarum*, II, ii, iv, vi.

⁷¹ *Works*, V, 176-7.

⁷² See Knappen, *Tudor Puritanism*, pp. 476-8.

⁷³ *Works*, II, 311-12; VI, 40-50, 58, 509-10.

rather than experimental knowledge.⁷⁴ Milton's opinion was similar. He permitted Raphael to tell Adam only that

which best may serve
To glorifie the Maker, and inferr
Thee also happier.⁷⁵

Both Milton and Hall viewed without alarm the changing heavens which the new astronomy was revealing, for they did not consider it within man's power to arrive at the real truth. Milton's Raphael said:

To ask or search I blame thee not, for Heav'n
Is as the Book of God before thee set,
Wherein to read his wondrous works, and learne
His Seasons, Hours, or Days, or Months, or Yeares:
This to attain, whether Heav'n move or Earth,
Imports not, if thou reck'n right, the rest
From Man or Angel the great Architect
Did wisely to conceal, and not divulge
His secrets to be scann'd by them who ought
Rather admire.⁷⁶

Raphael was merely preaching the same lesson as Hall who raised his eyebrows over the speculations of astronomers and asked, "What if there be no element of fire?" He chose "rather to wonder at that strange philosophy than to wrangle about it."⁷⁷ Man, by his very nature, could never hope to know the real answers.⁷⁸ Though as a man his best faculty was reason, he should realize that as a Christian his best faculty was faith, that faith began where reason ended. If reason in its criminal pride were to encroach upon the bounds of faith, the result might be infidelity and the loss of heaven.⁷⁹

All these points of agreement, however, were outside the field of controversial politics. As soon as Milton and Hall came near questions that affected church or state government, they immediately began to differ. Hall opposed anything which he thought might bring revolution closer. On principle, for in-

⁷⁴ *Works*, I, 15-16

⁷⁵ *Paradise Lost*, VII, 115-17.

⁷⁶ *Paradise Lost*, VIII, 66-168.

⁷⁷ *Works*, VIII, 338.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, VI, 540-1. Cf. *Ibid*, VI, 619-20; VIII, 24.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 16; II, 298-9, 332; V, 160; VII, 265, 440, 473; X, 137.

stance, he opposed change and novelty. "The old way, saith the prophet, is the good way: every novelty carries suspicion in the face of it . . . if it be the great and glorious style of God, that *in him is no shadow by changing*; surely those well settled churches and states come nearest to his perfection that alter least.⁸⁰ Milton, naturally, took quite the opposite stand:

Error supports Custome, Custome count'nances Error. And these two between them would persecute and chase away all truth and solid wisdom out of humane life, were it not that God, rather than man, once in many ages, calls together the prudent and Religious counsels of Men, deputed to repress the encroachments, and to worke off the inveterate blots and obscurities wrought upon our minds by the subtle insinuating of Error and Custome.⁸¹

Though Hall was perfectly willing to agree that the existing system of government might have faults which should be purged, he still maintained that the system was a good one, in fact, the only right one. In the ideal society, as he saw it, the individual was definitely subordinated to the system. Strongly emphasizing the principle of degree, he insisted that every creature had its preordained place and its preordained duties.⁸² Imbalance resulted when any man attempted to move from his proper position, when mean men desired to become great lords, or when great lords neglected to perform the duties of their position.⁸³ Always he emphasized the necessity of putting country above self.⁸⁴ Milton did not, of course, admire worldly ambition or preach pure self-interest any more than Hall. Satan's ambitious desire to move up in heaven had been the original cause of present trouble. The anti-episcopal pamphlets crackle with sneers at ambitious bishops. Nevertheless, Milton's way of looking at the individual in society would, if followed, lead to a loosening of class distinctions. For though he would have agreed that every man had an assigned place and duties to perform, he would not have agreed that

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, V, 515. Cf. *Ibid.*, V, 301; VI, 113-4.

⁸¹ *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, Columbia Milton, III, 368. See also *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, *op. cit.*, IV, 18

⁸² See *Works*, II, 382; VI, 562-3; VII, 484, 524, 533, 585, 592, 625; IX, 529; X, 26, 179.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, V, 99; VII, 592, 596; VIII, 152; X, 171-2; *Virgidemiarum*, III, iii; IV, ii.

⁸⁴ *Works*, I, 490; II, 239, 258; VI, 71, 636-7; VII, 50, 69, 463.

the place assigned by society should necessarily be equated with the place assigned by God. "Magnanimity," he says, "is shown, when in the seeking or avoiding, the acceptance or refusal of riches, advantages, or honors, we are actuated by a regard to our own dignity rightly understood." From the Bible he gives examples of persons, like Joseph, who have properly risen in the social scheme. Conversely, he says, pride comes when a man values himself without merit, or more highly than his merits deserve.⁸⁵ Vague terms like "dignity rightly understood" are much more likely to lend support to ambition than a firm insistence that a man belongs in the condition to which he was born. Hall believed that if every individual would busy himself to fill the place in which society had put him, he could not fail to be as happy as he ought. Milton thought that if the individual members were happy, society as a whole could not fail to be happy. It is interesting that each can use the same metaphor to illustrate a different conclusion. Hall:

When the head and members unite their thoughts and endeavours in the centre of the common good; the head to devise and command, the eyes to see, the ear to hear, the palate to taste, the heart to move, the bellows of the lungs to blow, the liver to sanguify, the stomach to digest, the guts to export, the hands to execute, the tongue to talk for the good of this natural commonwealth of the body; all goes well and happily; but if any of these parts will be gathering to themselves, and obstructions grow within, and mutinous distempers arise in the humours, ruin is threatened to the whole. If either the superior miscommand or the inferiors disobey, it is an affront to peace.⁸⁶

Milton:

A Commonwealth ought to be but as one huge Christian personage, one mighty growth, and stature of an honest man, as big. and compact in vertue as in body; for looke what the grounds, and causes are of single happines to one man, the same yee shall find them to a whole state, as *Aristotle* both in his ethicks, and politiks, from the principles of reason layes down; by consequence therefore, that which is good, and agreeable to monarchy will appeare soonest to be so, by being good, and agreeable to the true wel-fare of every Christian, and that which can be justly prov'd hurtful and offensive to every true Christian will be evinced to be alike hurtful to monarchy: for *God* forbid, that we should separate and distinguish the

⁸⁵ *Christian Doctrine*, *Columbia Milton*, XVII, 241, 243, 247.

⁸⁶ *Works*, V, 222-3.

come only from God and that the affliction must be borne by the people as a punishment for past misdeeds.⁹⁵ Milton, with his greater emphasis on the good of the individual, came to regard the free commonwealth as the best form of government. "Free Commonwealths," he said, "have bin ever counted fittest and properest for civil, vertuous and industrious Nations, abounding with prudent men worthie to govern: monarchie fittest to curb degenerate, corrupt, idle, proud, luxurious people."⁹⁶ He always considered the king subject to human law, insisting that punishment for a royal transgression should be the same as that for a crime committed by any other malefactor.⁹⁷ "If God be said to give a people into slavery whenever a tyrant prevails over the people, he argued, why ought he not as well be said to set them free whenever the people prevail over a tyrant?"⁹⁸

In other words, Milton could imagine a justifiable revolution; Hall could not. From Hall's point of view civil war could never be a just war. "Only kings are the public justicers of the world," he said.⁹⁹ If private men make war, "They are traitors and not soldiers."¹⁰⁰ Than civil war, "nothing under heaven [is] more ghastly and dreadful . . . nothing that doth so nearly resemble hell."¹⁰¹ Milton judged civil war and foreign war by the same standards.

Who knows not that there is a mutual bond of amity and brotherhood between man and man over all the world, neither is it the English Sea that can sever us from that duty and relation: a straiter bond yet there is between fellow-subjects, neighbours, and friends; But when any of those doe one to another so as hostility could doe no worse, what doth the Law decree less against them, then op'n enemies and invaders? or if the Law be not present, or too weake, what doth it warrant us to less then single defence or

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 243-4, 350; II, 149, 168-9.

⁹⁶ *Brief Notes, Columbia Milton*, VI, 160. See also *A Readie and Easie Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth*, *op. cit.*, pp. 119, 120, 130.

⁹⁷ See *Eikonoklastes*, *op. cit.*, V, 170, 186; *The First Defence of the English People*, *op. cit.*, VII, 75, 221, 379-81; *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, *op. cit.*, V, 8-12, 50-51.

⁹⁸ *The First Defence of the English People*, *op. cit.*, VII, 181. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 75 and *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, *op. cit.*, V, 21.

⁹⁹ *Works*, V, 67-8.

¹⁰⁰ *Works*, V, 67.

¹⁰¹ *Works*, VII, 52-3. See also *Ibid.*, V, 629; VI, 660; X, 149.

civil warr? and from that time forward the Law of civil defensive warr differs nothing from the Law of forren hostility.¹⁰²

Finally, the difference between Hall's ideal of a society in which wholeness was the important thing and Milton's emphasis on society with the individual as the starting point is reflected in their varying ideas of liberty.¹⁰³ Hall said that the good man is free; "he doth what he will; for he wills what God wills, and what God would have him will."¹⁰⁴ As Hall saw it, God would naturally will man to preserve the fixed order of things. Milton's liberty to "utter and to argue freely according to conscience," Hall would classify along with the "drunken liberty" of slanderers, the "profane liberty of atheous swaggers," and the "disloyal liberty of those rebellious spirits which despise government."¹⁰⁵ Not the conscience of the individual but "God's book is the true magna charta, which enacts both king and people their own."¹⁰⁶ Milton, unlike Hall, did not belittle criticism of established custom by calling it license; if an institution or custom did not seem to him reasonable, he thought it should be abolished. He did not, however, advocate anarchy. As he saw it, the check which the free man must keep over himself was even more strict than outside regulations would be. Where Hall idealistically left the king subject only to his own conscience, Milton would do the same for every good Christian. When Milton found that every man was not capable of ruling himself in this way, his scorn was bitter.

But this is got by casting Pearl to Hoggs;
That Bawle for freedom in their senceless mood,
And still revolt when truth would set them free.
License they mean when they cry libertie;
For who loves that, must first be wise and good.

"Know," he said, "that as to be free is precisely the same thing as to be pious, wise, just and temperate, careful of one's own, abstinent from what is another's, and thence, in fine, magnanimous and brave—so, to be the opposite of these, is the

¹⁰² *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, Columbia Milton, V, 21, 31-2.

¹⁰³ For a full discussion of Milton's ideas on liberty see Arthur Barker, *Milton and the Puritan Dilemma* (Toronto, 1942).

¹⁰⁴ *Works*, V, 397.

¹⁰⁵ *Works*, V, 394, 396.

¹⁰⁶ *Works*, V, 395.

same thing as to be a slave.”¹⁰⁷ “For Liberty hath a sharp and double edge, fit only to be handled by Just and Vertuous Men, to bad and dissolute, it becomes a mischief unweildy in their own hands.”¹⁰⁸

Both men were defending ideals which they were never likely to see in actual operation. Politically it might be said that Hall was looking back toward the Middle Ages, Milton forward toward nineteenth-century liberalism. Each did his best to express what he thought was wrong with the world. Neither agreed with the other about the cause or the cure. It was not that one was black and the other white, or even that one was entirely mistaken and the other entirely correct. But the fact that each had the highest motives was not likely to make either forgive the other any sooner. Meanwhile they went on running their daily lives after much the same fashion, trying to control their passions, to moderate their pleasures, and to rule their households justly. Anyone trying to surmise, merely on the basis of personal conduct, which was the Puritan would have had difficulty making a distinction.

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¹⁰⁷ *Second Defence of the English People*, *Columbia Milton*, VIII, 249-51.

¹⁰⁸ *Character of the Long Parliament*, *Columbia Milton*, XVIII, 253-4. See also *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, *op. cit.*, V, 1-2; *Comus*, line 1018.

JOHN RICH AND THE FIRST COVENT GARDEN THEATRE

By HOWARD P. VINCENT

As the founder of pantomime on the English stage, as one of the greatest Harlequins in theatre history, and as the producer, under pressure, of the *Beggar's Opera*, John Rich has established firmly his place in theatrical annals. Among the most illustrious of his achievements was the building of the first Covent Garden Theatre, a feat which is the concern of this paper.

The history of the first Covent Garden Theatre has been told by Mr. H. Saxe Wyndham.¹ A large body of detailed information may now be added to his account to make it more complete. Our information comes from the records in Chancery of litigation between John Rich and Edward Shepherd,² the contractor who constructed the building. The law troubles arose when Rich, angry at defects appearing in his splendid new building, hastened to court to prevent Shepherd from collecting his final payments on the playhouse until the building contract had been satisfactorily fulfilled. The subsequent litigation was voluminous—and revealing; the bills and replications, long and repetitious even for Chancery, are packed with abundant, though biased, details from both plaintiff and defendant, so that although no depositions have as yet turned up, a coherent story of the actual circumstances may be constructed.

John Rich's little theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields had served him well ever since his father, the notorious Christopher Rich, had built it in 1714, but the success of the *Beggar's Opera*, 1728 and following, and the unabated popularity of his pantomimes convinced him that he needed a new, a larger building. Accordingly, on 16 March 1731, Rich "with an intent to build on the Ground . . . a Theatre or Playhouse," leased from the Duke of Bedford for a term of sixty years "One piece or

¹ *Annals of Covent Garden Theatre* (London, 1906), I, 24 ff.

² Wyndham gives the name as James Shepherd.

parcell of Ground containing by Estimation from East to West One hundred and Twenty feet of Assize little more or less Situate, Lying and being in the parish of Saint Paul Covent Garden." The land was "on the North Side of the Angle of Covent-Garden Great Piazza or Portico."³

The land procured, John Rich issued subscription proposals for this project. He offered fifty shares at £300 a share: £100 payable on signing the proposal, the second £100 payable on Lady Day 1732, and the final £100 due whenever the theatre was finished. Upon receiving the final payment for each share, Rich's preresentatives, Christopher Cock and Benjamin Hoare, were to assign to the subscriber for a term of 61 years one-fiftieth part in the theatre. The subscribed agreed to lease his share to Rich for a term of 61 years less one month. For this lease the subscriber would receive two shillings each acting night and a pass to all performances.⁴

Rich next visited Edward Shepherd, architect and builder in Hanover Square. They came immediately to an oral agreement⁵ so that Shepherd might begin construction pending the formal, legal signing of the articles of agreement, to be drawn up by Rich's lawyers. Rich confessed to Shepherd that he was a "Stranger to building," so that he "hoped that Edward Shepherd would act like a man of honour."⁶ Shepherd, Rich said, accepted the contract, his "chiefe View in undertaking the building of the said Theatre was to serve your Orator [Rich] (for whom he profest great friendship) and not any designe of Gaine save that of reputation."

The articles of Agreement signed by Rich and Shepherd on 3 June 1731 contained careful stipulations concerning not only the quantity and quality of the materials to be used, but also the manner in which they were to be put together.⁷ Shepherd

³ C11 2662/1, Bill of John Rich, sworn 15 March 1733.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ C11 2732/81, Bill of Edward Shepherd, sworn 3 May 1734.

⁶ C11 2262/1, Bill of John Rich

⁷ "Erect and build a Theatre with all and every the appurtenances and Conveniencys thereunto properly appertaining with the best of Materialls and Workmanship and according to the Demensions in the plan or Sections thereunto annexed. . . . And (among other things) That the Stage the front and Side boxes Gallarys and Benches should be finished in as good a manner in all respects as those at the Theatre in Lincolns Inn feilds (Except the Lineing of the boxes and Seat Covering History Painting Gilding and Glasses which were not to be done by the said

contracted to finish the theatre by St. Michael's day, 1732. Rich agreed to pay £5600 in the following manner:

- 1 — £1000 when the brickwork had been carried up as high as the stage floor, and notice of such work had been left in writing at Rich's house, the money to be paid within six days.
- 2 — £1000 when the brickwork was carried up high "as the first Gallery floor (commonly called Eighteen penny Gallery)," and notice in writing given as before.
- 3 — £1000 when the roofs were laid on, and notice given as before.
- 4 — £1000 when the roofs were covered in, and notice given as before.
- 5 — £1000 when the plastering was done, the staircases and passage pavements finished, and notice given as before.
- 6 — £600 further when a notice of the completion of the theatre was received by Rich.⁸

The total of £5600 was to be paid by 21 December 1732. If at any time variations were made from the plans or the articles of agreement, the value of such changes was to be determined

Edward Shepherd but by your Orator) That the Vaults under the intended Great Lobby and the Boxes and passages leading thereto should be Joyced and boarded That the Outside passages where no Rooms were intended to be built over should be Roofed and Tyled with Glazed pantiles or Plain Tiles according to the said annexed plan or otherwise finished as requested by your Orator and should be paved with Purbeck Stone from end of the East and West Sides of the intended Theatre, That the Lodgements above the stage for the flyings should be framed with good Yellow Deals without Sap on each side of the Stage fifteen foot wide. That the Boxes over the Stage Door and the boxes over the two Side Boxes adjoining to the Kings and princes Boxes should be Ornamented with Entabliture as delineated in the said Plan That there should be in and about the said Theatre as many Staircases as assigned by the said Plan which should be finished in a good proper and Substantiall manner And that the Musick Room, Treasurers Boxkeepers and other Offices and other Conveniencys necessarily appertaining to the Theatre (and as that at Lincolns Inn feilds) should be done and finished with good and Substantiall yellow boarded floors without Sap And that a Carpenters Workshop, a paintinge Roome Such Wardrobes and other Conveniencys (as should be required by your Orator) should be made in the roofo of the said intended Sashes with Castle Glass (Except those in the Green Roome) with good Lines Weights and pulleys and Plates the Sills of Door Cases and Windows should be of good Oak That all the Gutters should be laid with Lead Eight pounds to each foot And that the water should be Conveyed down from the Roofes in good and proper Leaden pipes to the Draines and Sewers Which should and were to be made to receive and Convey the same to the Common Sewer And that all the Workes in and about the said intended building of Theatre should be done and performed in a good Strong and Substantiall Workmanlike with the best sort of Materialls." C11 2662/1, Bill of John Rich.

⁸ *Ibid.*

by two architects: Henry Joyner of Kensington and Roger Morris of St. George, Hanover Square. To secure payment to Shepherd, an indenture tripartite⁹ was drawn up granting him the lease of the grounds and all buildings thereon, the lease always redeemable by Rich upon the proper payment of the money with accrued interest.

Actual construction of the building began shortly after the oral agreement between the two men, and some time before the formal signing of the articles and the indenture. The public was informed of it by London papers. As early as 29 April 1731, the *Daily Advertiser* reported:

that a great number of workmen are daily employed in digging the foundations near Covent Garden on which a new playhouse is to very speedily built for Mr. Rich, the master of the Theatre Royal in Lincoln's Inn Fields—notwithstanding the various reports to the contrary.

By the time of the signing of the articles, 3 June 1731, the brickwork had been carried up twenty feet, or as high as the stage floor. Five months later, 6 August 1731, the *Daily Advertiser* stated that the building was "carrying on with such expedition and diligence . . . that it is thought it will be completely finished and ready to receive his audience next winter." Exactly one month later the *Weekly Journal*, 6 November 1731, reporting a bad accident, showed that work had reached the roof:

Last Tuesday great Part of the Roof of the new Playhouse, which is building near Covent Garden, fell in, when several of the Men that were at work on the same had their Limbs broke, and some are bruised in such a manner, that it is thought they cannot live.

Shepherd's Bill against Rich traces the development of the construction: on 18 November 1731, Shepherd had laid the roof and one month later covered it in. On 19 August 1732¹⁰ he

While Drurian Actors, RICH, with envious eyes
In Bow street see th' aspiring fabric rise;
That great success thy design may crown,
Employs the wishes of the impartial Town

⁹ Between John Rich of the first part, Edward Shepherd of the second part, and Christopher Cock and Benjamu Hoare of the third part. C11 2662/1, Bill of John Rich.

¹⁰ So that on 31 August the Grub Street Journal broke into verse:

Too long indulgent to one House alone
 With brightest rays their partial favour shone:
 Now streaks of light, like early morn,
 With kind presage thy rising pile adorn.

“boarded all the floors . . . and the Gallerys and Stage and all the Walls and Cielings were plaistered and the staircases and pavements of the passages were compleatly finished.” Finally, Shepherd, on 10 December 1732, “did perfect and compleatly finish the said Theatre.”

Despite Shepherd's insistence on “expedition and diligence” from the workmen, matters did not progress to the satisfaction of John Rich. We knew from the Bill of Edward Shepherd that Rich was accustomed to visit the site of the new theatre to inspect the construction, and Shepherd reports that Rich approved of all that he saw. Such was not entirely the case, for we have the statements made by Rich in his Bill of 1733, and further, some jottings made by him in the form of a diary, in which he recorded his displeasure with specific details of the building. These rough notes—Rich was not much better in spelling than the famous Henslowe—now in the Harvard Theatre Collection, constitute the only known manuscript¹¹ of any extent in Rich's holograph, and also serve to supplement his charges against Shepherd.¹²

¹¹ I do not include the account books for the Theatres with which Rich was concerned. Presumably they are in the holograph of the treasurers of the theatre.

¹² New Play house, Covent Garden. Fryday 13th of August: 1731 The Bricklayers at a Stand for want of Bricks

Saturday y^e 14th: The Carpenters laying on part of the Framing of the Second floor in the Out Building Scantlings of the Girders 11 Inches by 8 Joyce 8 Inches by 2 in $\frac{3}{4}$ —

Monday y^e 16th. The Bricklayers at work on the South end of the Theatre—

Tuesday y^e 17th: The Carpenters putting joyce from The partition wall of the lobby to the foundation Wall of the Boxes w^{ch} Joyce they had began [*sic*] To lay only 4 Inches into the wall but have wth Much adoe laid them Quite through Its to be Observ'd that on this foundation wall the Gallery will be Supported therefore Care ought To be taken Accordingly—

Wednesday y^e 18th: The Bricklayers at work on The Building over the Intended Coffee roome (Mortar very Bad) the Bricklayers reason was He had but very little sand left—

Thursday y^e 19th: The girders over the scene roome Lay'd over the opening of the windows and one Exactly in the middle of a window the litle being A Cross Short grain'd Peice of timber and not Sufficient to Bare the weight—is Alter'd

Fryday August y^e 20th: The truss Brought in For to hang the Sound board Or Stage Ceiling to Scantlings of the Beames 13 Inches by 9 Braces 10 Inches by 9 Tuck post 9 Inches Square Collar beames 9 Inches by 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ Binding

Rich carefully itemized his complaints and grievances in his Bill of Complaint, sworn 15 March 1733. Shepherd, Rich alleged, did not follow scrupulously the terms agreed on: he used in the building

Joyce 9 Inches by 3½ The Plates are 12 Inches by 3 wich ought to Be 12 by 7 at least

Saturday y^e 21st: The Carpenters put in a Stronger Lintel in the roome of that taken notice of by me Thursady y^e 19th Inst.—

Monday August y^e 23^d: The Carpenters getting on The truss for the stage Ceiling the Bricklayers at Work on walls of the Out Buildings—

Tuesday y^e 24th: The Carpenters laying on the Frameng of the floor over the Intended Coffee roome Scantlings of the Girders 11 Inches by 8 Joyce 8 In: By 2¾ Lintil 11 Inches by 5—

Wednesday y^e 25th. The window frames Set to the Roomes over the sceen room Wich are the Ould Frames that Came out of the Cellers and are But 3 foot 6 Inches high—

Thursday y^e 26th. The Carpenters Cramping the Truss with Iron. the Boults to Small and Instead Of Key's ought to Be Scrue'd—

Fryday y^e 27th of August: The Carpenters putting on the Cramps and Finishing the truss over the Stage, the Bricklayers at work on the walls of the Theatre—

Saturday y^e 28th. The Carpenters at work on the Frameing of the Roof at M^r Theobalds yard The Bircklayers at work on the walls of the Theatre Window frames put into the Celler windows with 6 Iron barrs an Inch Square in Each frame—

Monday y^e 30th. The Bricks very Bad of wich I Broke a Great many, The Carpenters frameng The floors for the Uper Storie—

Tuesday y^e 31st. The Bricks so Bad I made them be Sett without the fence not to be Used, I Complain'd To M^r Shepherd their was no Sand he Order'd The Brick rubish to Be Screen'd and Said that Would Doe as well—

[Mr. Van Lennep, Curator of the Harvard Theatre Collection, writes me: "There is undoubtedly a *lacuna* in the manuscript at this place, covering the months of September and October. The entries for August cover three sides of two folio leaves, the pages being numbered 1, 2, 3, the verso of leaf two being blank. The entries for November are on the recto of a folio leaf separate from the other two leaves and stop abruptly three-fourths of the way down the leaf."]

New Play-House Cov^t Garden Nov^{br} the 1st 1731. A wet Day Nobody at Work Tuesday y^e 2^d one of the Beames lays close to the Chimney funnels and the Plates 4 Inches over the Funnels.

Wednesday y^e 3^d. The Carpenters raising the Principals Which fell Yesterday— Thursday y^e 4 and fryday y^e 5th: Ditto—

Saturday y^e 6st: The Bricklayers began to work on The Gable ends—

Monday y^e 8th: The Plates I Observe are cutt to 7 Inch^s Where the Chimney funnels come up—

Tuesday y^e 9th. the Bricklayers bringing up the Gable ends 3 bricks thick, which should be but 2, I think it's Adding weight were [*sic*] it may very likely Doe Prejudice to the Building, but Can be of no Service, the reason Induceing them to Doe It I Iudge To be. they have fram'd the roof to Short by 9 Inches—The Bricks wett wich will make the work Scale When the Frost takes it—No Pargentine to the Funnels till I found fault with the want of It.

bad Bricks Mortar Timber and other Materiall and did not performe his Work in a good Substantiall or Workmanlike manner and did not inspect or give directions to his Workmen as he ought to have done, being frequently absent therefrom for Severall Weeks together and had no proper person in his absence to direct the Workmen.

Because of this neglect Rich complained to Shepherd several times. Then on 14 August 1731 he wrote to the builder that the carpenters, instead of framing the great lobby, were laying on only a single joist, that the plates for the roof and scantlings were only 12" x 5" whereas in Lincoln's Inn Field they were 12" x 7". Although Shepherd received this notification in sufficient time to remedy the error, evidence shows that he failed to do so. To add to the complications, Mr. Morriss, Shepherd's representative in all arbitration, "was absent from this Kingdom and beyond the Seas so that during such his absence, no meeting could be had."

Disappointed, but hoping all the time for better materials and workmanship, Rich between 28 January 1731 and 19 September 1732 paid through Benjamin Hoare £4100 to Edward Shepherd.¹³ These payments, however, failed to improve conditions, so that Rich again felt compelled to write, 2 October 1732, to acquaint Shepherd with what ought to be done. Rich had good reason to be concerned: it was becoming obvious to him that he would not be able to move into the new theatre at the beginning of the season, and he would accordingly lose considerable money by the delayed opening.

There was much to be done. A compact statement of the needs will prove this: rooms for the barbers and tailors were to be made in the roof floor; the partitions, the bannistered staircase, and the "Scurting board" were not finished as in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and the "hinges to the Dressing Room Doors were not Sufficient nor to most of the Box Doors"; the plastering of the ceiling over the pit was "so ill Laid, that your Orator was apt to think it could not stand long and that there was a Necessity for a new Ceiling before it could be painted," and, indeed, the ceiling itself was hung so poorly that it had settled; the balconies and the boxes over the stage boxes should

¹³ Shepherd had saved some money, Rich stated, in using some of Rich's own materials, and had agreed to reduce his bill accordingly.

be lowered accordingly because they were of no use since they were incommoded by the beams of the stage ceiling and the intersections of the arches; the arches should be taken down and the entablature "putt up as delineated" in Shepherd's designs; the poorly constructed flyings should be strapped with iron "and boarded to the extremity of the Joyce"; the windows should have "good Inch and halfe Sashes with Weights Lines and pulleys Whereas in Severall of the Windows they were made to open with Hinges and to Shutt against the sill which could be no ways reckoned to be in a Substantiall & Workman-like manner nor would keep out the Weather"; the great window at the south end should be framed in iron instead of wood and all the windows in the roof should have iron saddle bars with each casement; there should be no sap in the boards (Shepherd had put in some green wood) and the floors should be nailed properly; the floor at the upper flying at the north end should be lowered to 9' 6" from the roof floor, and the intra beam be trussed better; the partitions behind the side boxes should parallel the walls and each box should have as many benches as at Drury Lane Theatre, each bench to be altered so that "each person Sitting might have as proper View of the Stage as the place would admitt which they could not have as they were then placed; that Shepherd should replace the wooden pipes with ones of lead; "That a privy should be made at the North East Angle Just Without the Stage Door which privys should be of Sufficient Depth not to be of any Annoyance to the Theatre."

These are only some of the charges brought by Rich against Shepherd.¹⁴ Shepherd made heated denials of many of Rich's

¹⁴ Further charges were: the hinges to the boxes should be stronger, partitions should "divide the Centre of each Box on the right hand and left of the Kings front Box" just as at the old theatre; the bearings under the boxes should be made of better deal and able to receive nails; the door to the scene room was narrower than the plans called for and Shepherd had stopp'd up the space with brick; all the roof windows should be leaded, especially the Great Window and the semi-circular windows should be properly sashed; a splint should be placed on the side boxes to raise them to the same height as at the Lincoln's Inn Fields house; the chimney in the painting room needed to be raised and hovelled, "for as it was, the Wind blew the fire about the room which much Endangered the building; the passages on each side of the theatre should have good walls up to the roof plates, with arches left for lights; so badly were the plates and rafters placed in the passages next to Sir James Thornhill's room that there was great reason to fear that they would soon fall unless better supported; there should be two rails

assertions. For instance, his integrity was slandered by Rich's statement that new privies were needed. On the contrary; he retorted

that there are three instead of two privys made (with two Holes in the Seat of each) in a paved Yard for better accommodation and sweetness and to prevent any nauseous Smells or Annoyance to the Theatre are sunk down to the Springs . . . and that the Places where the same are now made are the most proper and convenient places.

It is interesting to read that Shepherd corrected some of his mistakes: scyrting boards, props for the rafters, iron spikes and rails around the area over the stage were put in by the builder, but all the rest of Rich's points were ignored.

At the meeting (time not stated) between the two arbitrators it was agreed that Shepherd had not performed his articles in several instances, "And particularly that the Brick Work was very bad and that there were Settlements in the Gavell ends So that part of the Gavell ends of the said Theatre must be took down and rebuilt." Shepherd agreed to this also, but when he insisted that a number of the deviations from the articles were necessary for the improvement of the building or that some of the changes made no functional difference, Rich insisted that such deviations were not proper "but on the contrary were very improper."

Disturbed at the prospective loss entailed by a delayed opening, Rich proceeded at his own expense and on his own initiative to pave the passages, leading to the streets, on each side of the theatre. He also patched up other mistakes by Shepherd's workers, but much was still left undone. This was costly,

since the making use of the said Theatre for Acting of plays, the Cloaths and Scenes made use of therein Suffered great prejudice by reason of all or most of the Chimnys Smoaking to so great a Degree that your Orator was forced frequently when the said Edward Shepherd was by and present at the said Theatre to Cause Severall

and a scyrting board around the area over the stage between the painting and wardrobe rooms, just as at Lincolns Inn Fields, with also a scyrting board between each room where the walls were only plastered; the leaden gutters on the roof should be eight pounds to the foot instead of six and likewise the lead which covered the windows should be six pounds to the foot instead of four; there should be an iron strowle for each box and iron spikes over the partition dividing the pit from the music room.

of the fires to be put out, the funnels of the Chimneys being many of them improperly carried into each other and many of them not above Nine inches by Six Wide, which is so narrow that the Smallest Chimney Sweepers boy cannot go up the same, of the badness of which Chimneys by reason of the narrowness of the funnels . . . the Wett has beat into Severall of the Rooms and Severall of the Windows have been blown down.

Faulty drains contributed to the disorder, so that "the Ground of that part leading to the great Entrance of the Theatre out of the piazza Sunk, and Terrified and obstructed people resorting to the Theatre." At his own expense, Rich relaid the drain, only to have it fall in again. A new distraction was caused from bricks falling out of the great arch over the lobby.

We find Rich's indignation mounting as he reflected how virtuous and proper he had been in his dealing with Shepherd. He had paid Shepherd, up to the time of litigation, £4100, and the last payment was ready when Shepherd would fulfill honestly his contract. What hurt Rich further was that Shepherd refused to allow him to use the remaining £2700 (from the Subscription) in negotiations about the shares. To cap it all, Shepherd even refused to allow this money to be placed at interest pending a settlement of difficulties. Rich's indignation seems, from the evidence, justified. He was finally driven to take out a writ of subpoena against Cock, Hoare, and Shepherd to hasten a settlement of the issues.

It is a disappointment (common to research in Chancery) to report that the actual outcome is at present unknown. No judgments, so far as I can find, were recorded. Possibly Shepherd and Rich compromised rather than run up huge bills in another *Jarndyce v. Jarndyce*.

Built in bickering, the Covent Garden Theatre opened with great and long awaited brilliance on 9 December 1732 with a performance of Congreve's *Way of the World*. "The form of the edifice . . . was that of a truncated ellipse. The pit, which was 40 feet wide and 38 feet in depth, contained 20 seats, and held 632 persons: there were three circles of boxes, containing 1,200 persons; the lower gallery was 55 feet wide and 40 in depth, and contained sitting room for 820 spectators; the upper gallery, which was of the same width and 25 feet in

depth, contained seven seats, and held 361 persons.¹⁵ The structure survived the century, although it underwent drastic alterations in 1782, and at the respectable age of seventy six met its death by fire on December 1808.¹⁶

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¹⁵ Edward Wedlake Brayley, *Historical and Descriptive Accounts of The Theatre of London* (London, 1826), p. 15 n. It is possible that the 1782 alterations, designed by Holland and completed at a cost of £25,000—four times the original cost of the building!—may have been so extensive that the foregoing measurements have little reference to the Rich structure.

¹⁶ The burning was strikingly reminiscent of the burning of the Globe. wadding from the muskets used in Sheridan's *Pizarro* ignited the inflammable scenery.

"VISIBLE ESSENCES" IN *THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE*

By HOWARD O. BROGAN

"My art is to intensify the expression of things," wrote Hardy while *The Mayor of Casterbridge* was coming out serially, ". . . so that the heart and inner meaning is made visible."¹ Two months later he speculated whether the novel ought not to transcend the "analytic" method by rendering as "visible essences . . . the abstract thought of the analytic school."² While Mrs. Hardy thought the method suggested in this note was to be carried out in *The Dynasts* rather than in a novel, may it not have been suggested by the novel then appearing before the public? Certainly much in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* can best be understood as "visible essences" of "abstract thought."

A conscious, one might almost say a didactic purpose—which is really what Hardy means by "abstract thought"—determines his selection and arrangement of materials. His mode of expression, itself moulded by his permeating purpose, enriches the fundamental narrative with orchestrated overtones of meaning to give the depth and emotional power of excellent art. By paying close attention to these overtones of meaning, I hope to clarify Hardy's purpose in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and to elucidate his means of giving complete artistic expression to it both in his main narrative and in its important envelope container.

In the envelope section at the beginning the drunken hay-trusser Michael Henchard sells his wife Susan and their child to a sailor named Newson. That the physical exchange of money represents a mental acceptance of sale is made plain by Henchard's later sending Susan exactly five guineas as a symbol of repurchase.

Weydon-Priors Fair itself, where the sale occurs, no less un-

¹ Florence E. Hardy, *Early Life of T. Hardy* (N. Y., 1928), pp. 231-2: Hardy's note for Jan. 3, 1886.

² *Ibid.*, p. 232: note for March 4, 1886.

mistakably stands for something more than a place. In no other setting than a fair given over chiefly to the sale of livestock could the disposal of Susan so appropriately take place. Hardy emphasizes this fact by having the auctioning off outside the tent of "a very promising brood-mare . . . a little holler in the back and . . . her left eye knocked out" suggest to Henchard the auctioning off of his chattel wife inside.³ With the economy of the careful craftsman Hardy is not content to use his fair for one purpose only, but also makes of this annual and ancient event one of his symbols for the inescapable past (what Henchard does here remorselessly follows him through life) and of the deteriorating present, for every time the action recurs to the fairground progressive decay is apparent. Eighteen years later, when Susan comes back, business has markedly fallen off; and when near the end of the novel Henchard returns, he finds the grounds as bleak and deserted as his own life.⁴

The scenes of the opening section seem to be permeated with double meanings. The gray autumnal monotony of the landscape, carpeted by dust from the common road, corresponds to Henchard's marriage, to which usage has given an "atmosphere of stale familiarity."⁵ After the sale the beauty of the sunset, with "the sight of several horses crossing their necks and rubbing each other lovingly," is expressly declared to denote the indifference of nature to human crime.

The very birds take on esoteric significance. The "trite old evening song," which might have been heard on that hill "at the same hour, and with the self-same trills, quavers, and breves, at any sunset of that season for centuries untold," seems to be

³ The sale is also obviously Hardy's method of emphasizing a favorite topic: the unjust position of women in his society.

⁴ In Jan. 1887 (*Early Life*, p. 242) Hardy notes that he had come to look for mystery rather than beauty in nature. He did not want painters to give him mere realistic landscape, but the "deeper reality underlying the scenic, the expression of what are sometimes called abstract imaginings."

⁵ Supplementary meanings not contradictory to that given above, have been found in this scene by other critics. S. S. Chew, *T. Hardy, Poet and Novelist* (N. Y., 1928), 90-1, notes that several of Hardy's novels open on a road, which seems to represent the avenue by which the reader is conducted into the story. D. Cecil, *Hardy the Novelist* (N. Y., 1943), p. 140, thinks the road here is an image of the bleak pilgrimage which is to be the subject of the story. To make the road serve several purposes would be no more unbelievable an economy for the novelist than for the painter who might similarly make a road an object in harmony with its surroundings, a line leading the eye into the painting, a symbol of wayfaring.

a palpably ironic reversal of the eternal beauty of song in Keats's nightingale. A swallow, "among the last of the season," whose involuntary swoops through the tent give Henchard a last chance by interrupting the sale (it escapes as Susan does after a brief captivity) is strikingly similar to the bird in Bede's Parable of the Sparrow, with its fatalistic pagan outlook on man's place in the universe.⁶

Characters as well as settings bear a double freight of meaning. The sailor who buys Susan, named Newson to indicate his function as intruder, has been placed by another critic among the "Mephistophelian visitants" who in a number of Wessex novels pursue their unfortunate victims through misfortune to death.⁷ The furmity woman, given the name of Mrs. Goodenough to qualify her as Henchard's nemesis,⁸ clings to him like a fate, tempting him to the drunkenness which is his ruin, overthrowing his reputation by charging him with wife-selling at a critical point in his career, and helping to plan the skimmington-ride which results in humiliating him almost to the point of suicide.

Perhaps the neatest use of "visible essences" in this opening section is not to be found either in the settings or the characters but in the action: the dilemma of Susan's choice of a place of refreshment at the fair. Avoiding the licensed liquor tent, she chooses one in which furmity is sold, where her husband finds that he can have this soup laced with smuggled rum. They read superficially who think Hardy intended the purpose of her choice to be frustrated by mere chance. The presence of rum in the tent was not accidental; it was habitually there, though Susan could not know that. She only appears to have a choice; the dice are loaded against her however she throws. Once in his cups her husband is likely to attempt to sell her, as the reader is informed he has repeatedly tried to do before, the more often he attempts the more likely to succeed.⁹ Like

⁶ "So this life of man appears for a short space, but of what went before, or what is to follow, we are utterly ignorant," *Ecclesiastical Hist.* (Everyman's Lib. ed.), p. 91.

⁷ J. O. Bailey, "Hardy's Mephistophelian Visitants," *PMLA*, LXI (1946), pp. 1162-4.

⁸ Especially in her second appearance as a withered old crone croaking over a kettle, she strongly resembles a Shakespearean witch.

⁹ Fate operates through character here, not as external force. Henchard's pro-

the dusty landscape with its songster, like the double auction outside and inside the tent (briefly interrupted by one of the season's last swallows), like the characters of Newson and Mrs. Goodenough, this dilemma is a "visible essence" of Hardy's "abstract imaginings" about the unfortunate position of man in his universe.

From the unmistakable duality of meaning in the opening section, which approaches outright allegory at times, the reader naturally suspects that many a detail in the central part of the novel "means what it says, and another thing besides."¹⁰ Certainly setting continues to be much more than mere background. Susan and her now fully grown daughter Elizabeth-Jane approach Casterbridge in the evening by a tree-shaded avenue—"down a dusk between two gloamings"—descriptive of Hardy's general outlook on life, and enter an ancient city, whose various sections are represented physically and spiritually by selected architectural structures.

Three inns—The King's Arms, The Three Mariners, and Peter's Finger—present the respective attitudes of the city fathers, the middling respectable, and the social dregs. Their very names indicate function, The Three Mariners of Hardy's final version having no doubt been degraded from the King o' Prussia of an earlier version to adapt it to a lower class,¹¹ and Peter's Finger having an obvious appropriateness for a long, narrow, secretive "dive" in a bawdy district fittingly called Mixen Lane. Three corresponding bridges are utilized in different ways by failures from the same three levels of society: the old and new bridges and the hidden poacher's plank for the brook behind Peter's Finger.¹² Henchard's old-fashioned house,

pensity to excessive drink, a corollary to his immoderation in other respects, is the determining factor in the sale.

¹⁰ E. E. Stoll's definition of symbolism in "Symbolism in Coleridge," *PMLA*, LXIII (1948), p. 216.

¹¹ Compare Ch. VI of the serial (*The Graphic*, Vol. 33, p. 70 ff.) with that of Hardy's final revised version, the Wessex Edition, which—because it is not always available even in university libraries—will be uniformly referred to in this paper in the readily available Modern Library reprint.

¹² H. Gardner, *Some Thoughts on T. Hardy*, Engl. Assoc Pamphlet No. 77 (Nov., 1930), p. 11, suggests the symbolism of the two main bridges as "places pregnant with the psychic influence of past associations. . . ." The plank as a third bridge is suggested by Donald Dike of Syracuse University in an unpublished MS, "Action as Transaction in Casterbridge."

with its garden¹³ and business buildings behind, is a "visible essence" of his worldly success, and is inevitably acquired by his rival along with his money, his social position, and his women.¹⁴ High Place Hall (a more emphatic version of the earlier High Street Hall¹⁵), a "visible essence" of Lucetta's superior social status, is an even more brilliant illustration of Hardy's skill in giving overtones of significance to an edifice. This fine old house has a dignified Palladian front, but when Elizabeth-Jane steps through a rear door (obviously a remnant of an older house), she finds herself in a dark alley secretly connecting with the less respectable parts of town. Looking back, she is startled to discover the doorway arch crowned with a hideous Gothic mask, so mutilated by the stones of passing boys as to look "eaten away by disease."¹⁶ Lest careless readers overlook his purpose Hardy explicitly states that "the leering mask suggested one thing above all others as appertaining to the mansion's past history—intrigue."¹⁷ Surely it is no accident that the complicated intrigues resulting from the overlapping love triangles of Farfrae—Lucetta—Henchard on the one hand and Lucetta—Farfrae—Elizabeth-Jane on the other are laid in this house.

High Place Hall overlooks the town market, a section of High Street, the commercial complications of which are suggested by the projections and recesses of boundary buildings of medieval irregularity. This market has certainly by no accident been placed at the center of a story dealing immediately with the corn and hay business¹⁸ and ultimately with wider problems

¹³ The human agony of the dwellers in this house has its counterpart in "the long-tied espaliers" which stand writhing "in vegetable agony" in the garden, "like leafy Laocoöns." *Mayor of Casterbridge* (Mod. Lib. ed.), p. 99.

¹⁴ To the careful reader Hardy betrays Elizabeth-Jane's love of Farfrae even in her choice of a room in this house. First she lives in the rear, where the reader casually learns that she sees Farfrae in the business yards. After he leaves Henchard's service, she is discovered living in front, and the reader casually learns that she sees Farfrae passing on the street.

¹⁵ Cf. the serial version (*The Graphic*, Vol. 33, p. 242) with the Wessex (Mod. Lib. ed., p. 178).

¹⁶ *The Mayor* (Mod. Lib. ed.), p. 182. Hardy noted (*Early Life*, p. 231) "The Hypocrisy of things." Even the old and penetrating seldom get to realize that "nothing is as it appears."

¹⁷ Hardy had an eye for the symbolic value of architecture, objecting for that reason (*Early Life*, p. 240) to the use of ecclesiastical detail in a law court.

¹⁸ S. S. Chew, *op. cit.*, p. 110, notes that each novel is unified around one trade,

of purchase and sale, with vain attempts to compensate with material goods for the base relinquishment of human values.¹⁹ Merchant protagonist can here compete with merchant antagonist under the speculative eyes of their lady loves and the hazards of cutthroat business be increased by dubious interlocking transactions of wooing and wedding.

One other prominent medieval structure is the ruined priory. With a fine sense of appropriateness the Casterbridge jail has been built facing this former seat of voluntary retirement. Conspicuously placed in front of the jail is a gallows platform, wanting "the corpse of a man." This is the spot Henchard finds in "lugubrious harmony . . . with his domestic situation" ²⁰ when he discovers that Elizabeth-Jane is not really his daughter. After his bankruptcy Henchard is sent with similar appropriateness into a kind of monastic retirement in Jopp's cottage, which is built near the old priory and of rubble from its ruin.

Under the modern, the Palladian, and the Gothic cities lies the omnipresent Roman Casterbridge, a name altered from the real Dorchester to emphasize the Roman Past. We come to feel of it what Hardy felt of Rome itself ²¹ that its measureless layers of history bear down upon the spirit like a physical weight. Every excavation turns up buried Roman soldiers, mute symbols of a remote past against which present tragedy seems a futile and transitory pageant. Susan is buried in an ancient cemetery, surrounded by skeletons holding Roman coins in their mouths. To this antique world belongs the Roman road which marches straight away from the city, the grass-grown earthworks on the downs, such as the one on which Henchard holds his unsuccessful celebration, and—most conspicuous relic of all—the legion-haunted Ring, or abandoned amphitheater, another representative of the tragic sense of the past. After telling us that assignations to this spot are never between happy lovers, Hardy has Henchard meet Susan here, on her return to him, and Lucetta after her marriage to Donald,

and J. O. Bailey, *op cit*, comments on the symbolic function of some of these trades, as (p. 1150) that of the redleman.

¹⁹ Donald Dike, *op. cit.*, has a brilliant analysis of the market symbol.

²⁰ *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (Mod. Lib. ed.), p. 164.

²¹ *Early Life*, p. 247.

her appearance, like her appeal, horribly duplicating that of Susan. Both women bring with them to these meetings love interests as dead, as unfortunate in their histories, as the Ring itself.²²

If "Egdon Heath symbolizes the whole cosmic order, in which man is but an insignificant particle,"²³ then Casterbridge would appear to symbolize the human past, to which each generation adds only another thin layer of dust. Why did Hardy disinter the name Wessex from the history books and apply it to his novels except for the purpose of making "vividly visible" the long arm of the inescapable past?²⁴

While in this novel Hardy pays greater heed to past events than to nature as a fateful force in men's affairs, nature is by no means overlooked. Henchard's corn and hay business necessarily depends on the weather, and uncertain weather, misinterpreted by the passion-blinded corn factor, is made the instrument of his downfall. This weather is referred to in Shelley's term as an Alastor, or evil spirit, and Henchard thinks of it as the product of witchcraft or of malignant destiny.²⁵ The whole setting — man made and natural — is an integral part of the meaning of the book.

Yet neither history nor nature could operate with such fatal effect on another man.²⁶ The fluctuating weather that bankrupts the plunging Henchard enriches the cautious Farfrae. The "directing Force of the universe uses Henchard's own pride and high temper and stubbornness to work his ruin,"²⁷ in accordance with Hardy's usual procedure: "the more ardent, the more determined, the more selfish in the prosecution of his will, the more liable is the character to a grievous fall. . . ."²⁸ For this reason no doubt Hardy changed the name of his chief

²² A "ring" seems an oddly appropriate place for such intimately associated couples to meet, especially when the first coming together of man and woman is preceded by vivid recollection of ancient gladiatorial combat.

²³ E. A. Baker, *History of the English Novel* (London, 1938), IX, p. 36.

²⁴ See Hardy's preface to *Far From the Madding Crowd* (Harper's Modern Classics), N. Y., 1918.

²⁵ *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (Mod. Lib. ed.), p. 246.

²⁶ This fact must be what Hardy has in mind when he quotes approvingly Novalis's remark: "Character is Fate." *The Mayor* (Mod. Lib. ed.), p. 148.

²⁷ S. S. Chew, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

²⁸ W. T. Brewster, introduction to *Far from the Madding Crowd* (Harper's Modern Classics, N. Y., 1918), xxiv.

character in the completed manuscript from innocuous "James" to that held by the most warlike of the angels.²⁹ Michael's mild opponent, who in the end wins everything because he is not wilful and passionate, is named Donald, the etymological meaning of which is "world ruler," as if the author wished to emphasize that in his book the meek are really to inherit the earth.

Like the ancient city in which he lives, Henchard expresses the past. Compared to Farfrae's his methods of trade are old-fashioned:

He used to reckon his sacks by chalk strokes all in a row like garden-palings, measure his ricks by stretching with his arms, weigh his trusses by a lift, judge his hay by a 'chaw,' and settle the price with a curse.³⁰

Farfrae "typifies the ingress of new methods and ideas into Wessex."³¹ As Henchard's manager he straightens out the books and makes the business run "on oiled castors." As an independent merchant he brings in the corn drill—in the face of Henchard's ridicule—which is to revolutionize local agriculture. Henchard leaves Casterbridge in defeat just as the railway approaches, and, returning to Weydon-Priors, finds that the fair also has been destroyed by modern progress.

In addition to embodying old-fashioned business methods, Henchard is certainly intended to typify fallen man, as is indicated by Hardy's comparing him at various points to Faust, Bellerophon, Napoleon, Saul, the Prince of Darkness, "a less scrupulous Job" cursing himself, and Cain.³² The

²⁹ Carl J. Weber, *Hardy of Wessex* (N. Y., 1940), p. 101. In his "Note on the MS. Names of Hardy's Characters," *Rev. Engl. Stud.*, X (1934), Prof. Weber, advancing evidence that Hardy alters some MS names to bring them closer to reality, attempts to disprove H. C. Duffin's belief (*T. Hardy, A Study of the Wessex Novels*, Manchester, 1921, p. 81) in the symbolism of the name Michael. In the light of Hardy's unmistakable intent in choosing such names as Farfrae and Mrs. Goodenough, as well as his seeming intent in many others, I believe he did not so much seek to approximate actuality as to capture that "deeper reality" underlying the real which he represents himself at this time as looking for in landscape paintings. See footnote 4.

³⁰ *Mayor of Casterbridge* (Mod. Lib. ed.), p. 138.

³¹ Chew, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-9.

³² *Mayor* (Mod. Lib. ed.), pp. 148, 149, 174, 241, 353, 360, 404. Prof. E. C. Amy in his annotated edition of this novel (N. Y., 1933) notes (for p. 386) that Henchard's cry at departing from Casterbridge is the negative of Cain's in *Genesis* 4: 13.

author never loses an opportunity to point out that Henchard's presiding sin is pride, and it is no doubt for his pride that he is made to go before a certain Mr. Fall, whose prophecy that in the coming season it will be more like living in Revelations than in England turns out, as ancient prophecies often did, to be correct in its main outlines though deceptive in its details.

Farfrae, another man with a name indicating an intruder coming from afar, has been given a disruptive part in the story similar to that filled in other Hardy novels by "unprincipled and characterless semi-villains,"³³ but thematically he is a contrast in his humility, pliability, and even temper to the proud and passionate mayor. He is the male equivalent of Elizabeth-Jane, even though the author can never quite forgive him for being Scotch, a sentimentalist, and a spiritual descendant of the fortunate supplanter Jacob.

The women, as is customary in Hardy's novels, bring on disaster, but nobody can blame them for that because they represent the inevitable tragedy of sex.³⁴ As in all the later novels, one suspects the women of embodying Schopenhauerian prejudices against the feminine.³⁵ Though supposed to be simple and honest, Susan yet manages twice to humiliate the overbearing Henchard, in submitting to sale, and in allowing Elizabeth-Jane to pass as his daughter. The gay and frivolous Lucetta plays fast and loose with both her suitors, as elusive and deceptive as the light for which she is ironically named.³⁶ Even Elizabeth-Jane, in spite of a tender heart, is the innocent cause of Henchard's greatest punishment.

Elizabeth-Jane is still more representative of the strengths than of the weaknesses of her sex. Hardy has given her a big,

³³ J. F. A. Pyre, introd. to *The Mayor* (Harper's Mod. Classics, 1922), p. xxxi.

³⁴ L. Abercrombie, *T. Hardy, a Critical Study* (London, 1912), p. 31.

³⁵ S. S. Chew, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

³⁶ Lucetta is commonly associated with remarkable effects of light (see especially pp. 215 and 229, Mod. Lib. ed.). Color also helps to interpret her, as when on a memorable occasion (pp. 214-15) she makes herself the scarlet woman by choosing a cherry-colored costume. Clothes and colors have a decided bearing on revelation of character generally. Elizabeth-Jane blossoms into beauty with a change of dress (pp. 123-4) which as perfectly indicates her natural good taste and moderation as the garb of the furmity woman (p. 258) does her drab vulgarity. Henchard's cycle of fortune is incomplete until he exchanges his seedy town clothes for his old hay-trusser's uniform (p. 408).

bold, marching hand that stamps her as "Minerva's own" and clear gray orbs which he describes as "Minerva-eyes."³⁷ In action as well as appearance she is embodied wisdom because she does not seek her desire by will and passion, as Henchard and Lucetta tragically do, but in perfect resignation makes the best of what fate sends to her.

Strangely enough all of the main characters, male and female are intruders into a community in which they do not really belong. Behind them, almost a part of the setting, stand the real Casterbridge people, who give a choral interpretation of events in the light of the proverbial wisdom of general mankind,³⁸ the timelessness of their utterance being further suggested by a skilful mingling of Shakespearean and local dialectal English,³⁹ and who erupt into the action at last to precipitate a crisis. When the *Mayor* was published, Hardy was censured for omitting the gentry, without whom, contemporary critics felt, no story could be interesting. His defense is a revealing document on his attitude toward all his characters. His critics mistakenly think, he writes, that a novel is "the thing, and not a view of the thing," and forget that "the characters, however they may differ, express mainly the author, his largeness of heart or otherwise, his culture, his insight, and very little of any other living person. . . ."⁴⁰ To him his characters were clearly "visible essences" of his own "abstract thought" about life.

³⁷ Mod. Lib. ed., pp. 168, 426. A note to p. 407 of Prof. E. F. Amy's valuable edition of the *Mayor* (N. Y., 1933) indicates the significance of the Minerva imagery. M. E. Chase, *T. Hardy from Serial to Novel* (Minneapolis, 1927), p. 48, writes of a change of color in Elizabeth-Jane's eyes from blue in the serial to black in the later book versions; but actually the eyes are gray in both the serial version in the *Graphic* and in the final Wessex version (see Mod. Lib. ed., pp. 89, 112, 426). Miss Chase seems to have been confused by Hardy's giving Susan's child by Michael eyes of a different color from those of the child she had by Newson (see Mod. Lib. ed., p. 10). Hardy gives the reader other early hints that Elizabeth-Jane is not Henchard's. She is only about eighteen when Susan returns to the fair eighteen years to the day after that sale at which the original child had been old enough to sit by itself, and she has light brown instead of black hair (Mod. Lib. ed., pp. 26, 114).

³⁸ D. Cecil, *op cit.*, p. 130.

³⁹ Chew, *ibid.*, p. 82, notes contemporary objection to Hardy's reflection of Shakespeare in his characters, as in the constables, and to his hybrid dialect. Abercrombie, *op cit.*, p. 59, refers to the speech of Hardy's common people as "English made out of dialect rather than dialect itself. . . ."

⁴⁰ T. Hardy, "Profitable Reading," *Forum*, V (1888), p. 69.

In the same defense of his art, Hardy asserts the literary craftsman's control over narrative structure: "to a masterpiece in story there appertains a beauty of shape, no less than to a masterpiece in pictorial or plastic art. . . ." ⁴¹ Elsewhere he approves Coleridge's dictum that art seeks illusion, ⁴² and in still another place he accepts the Aristotelian interpretation of the purpose of artistic illusion as the "being more truthful than truth (the just aim of art)" ⁴³ From these statements one would expect Hardy to select and arrange the events of his narrative as well as the settings and characters for the purpose of giving to it a beauty of shape, the expression of inner truth.

One critic objects to his use of multiple chance as "hackneyed and unnecessary corroborations" of tragic truthfulness. ⁴⁴ In the first place, if one define chance in the ordinary sense as something that befalls as a result of unknown forces, this story has less chance in it than one might suppose. Thus Henchard's discovery that Elizabeth-Jane is not his daughter rests on what seems to be his chance opening of his deceased wife's letter, yet this circumstance is carefully explained. Simple Susan, never having accustomed herself to letters, had not made the seal firm. The letter—the old-fashioned kind which folds into itself for an envelope, being unsealed, opened in Henchard's hand as he picked it up. He paid no attention to the superscription asking him not to read before Elizabeth-Jane's marriage because he had never taken Susan's wishes seriously, as was scandalously demonstrated in the opening sale. Henchard's discovery is certainly not owing to causes unknown. The causes are fully known to the reader and partially known to himself. ⁴⁵

The admirable irony permeating this episode depends on the reader's awareness that the expectations of Henchard are based on partial knowledge misinterpreted. He has just told Elizabeth-Jane of his supposed paternity, and with his usual impetuosity has persuaded her to write and immediately to

⁴¹ T. Hardy, *ibid.*, p. 66.

⁴² F. E. Hardy, *Early Life of T. Hardy* (N. Y., 1928), p. 197.

⁴³ T. Hardy, "The Science of Fiction," *New Review*, IV (1891), 316.

⁴⁴ E. A. Baker, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

⁴⁵ Character drives on circumstance here. H. C. Gardner, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-25, speaks of the "appositive illustrative incident" by which Hardy demonstrates preconceived character.

post to the local paper a public notice that she is to take his name. He then goes impulsively upstairs to complete his happiness by proving his paternity from Susan's papers. After his discovery he finds the girl's new tenderness of manner repulsive, yet he cannot disabuse her because after all his evidence is a letter which he was conspicuously directed not to open. This perverse concatenation of events, studiously contrived to make Henchard's tragic disillusionment seem perfectly probable, is no more owing to chance than is the chain of events by which the equally headstrong and impulsive Oedipus Rex is made to lay bare his own crimes.

Far from offering "hackneyed and unnecessary corroborations" to a tragedy already sufficiently motivated by character, these circumstances are essential to Hardy's conception of how people having no wicked intent nevertheless hurt each other. A universe of mechanically operating and incredibly complicated cause and effect inevitably thwarts the purpose of men and women, who, being human, are not omniscient. Elizabeth-Jane "had learnt the lesson of renunciation" from being "as familiar with the wreck of each day's wishes as with the diurnal setting of the sun."⁴⁰ That in the nature of things wishes must be wrecked is an inescapable part of Hardy's "abstract thought."

His narrative use of chance is part of his general philosophical conception—based on the science of the time—of a mechanistic universe. Narrative events reveal this philosophical conception in one way, as in another way it is revealed by character traits, presented as predetermined ways of responding to given stimuli, and in still another way by environmental factors, portrayed as a blend of influences from the historical past entering into the natural and social milieu of the present. Hardy's peculiar sense of irony as circumstantially instigated misconception and his peculiar theory of tragedy as the frustration of human will by circumstances beyond its control flow inevitably from the "abstract thought" by which he came to such a philosophic conception.

Certain key events, which their accompanying imagery seems to interpret as simple superstition, gain their distinctive representative value from the circumstantial causality, of which

⁴⁰ *The Mayor* (Mod. Lib. ed.), p. 231

a belief in simple superstition is a part, of Hardy's mechanistic philosophy. Thus the dinner at the King's Arms, during which Susan, Elizabeth-Jane, and Farfrae converge upon Henchard, is called his Austerlitz.⁴⁷ Farfrae and Henchard at tea with Lucetta seize opposite sides of a slice of bread, and neither being willing to give way to his rival, tear the bread in two—as they later do Lucetta—in an action suitably compared to supper at Emmaus.⁴⁸ Mrs. Goodenough ironically rises as a specter of the past before magistrate Henchard and hands down a long-delayed retributive sentence on her judge.⁴⁹ Elizabeth-Jane and Lucetta are pursued by a bull, the very image of Henchard's unruly passions, and are rescued by Henchard himself, as in time they are from his passions by his own surly self-denial.⁵⁰ The fight in the granary finds Farfrae, previously compared to Jacob, wrestling with Henchard in the character of an evil angel.⁵¹ The circumstantially instigated skimmington-ride (called a Demoniack Sabbath) with its effigies of Henchard and Lucetta bound back to back bears more than a casual resemblance to the actual relationship, as does the rescue of Henchard from suicide by his effigy floating on the weir.⁵² These key events provide climatic "visible essences" all the more convincing for being projected upon a web of circumstance representing "abstract thought" on cause and effect in the universe and against a background setting revealing "abstract thought" concerning the influence of history and nature upon human life. Has Hardy not written that the author should base his narrative not on crude event but on "faithful imagination, less the transcript than the similitude of material fact."?⁵³

Obviously the style is also part of the representative effect, for to Hardy style "can only be treatment, and treatment depends upon the mental attitude of the novelist; thus entering into the very substance of a narrative. . . ." ⁵⁴ The mental

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 258 ff.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 265 ff.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 352 ff.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 383 ff.

⁵³ "Profitable Reading," *Forum*, V, 63.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 68. Carl Weber, *op. cit.*, pp. 99-100, points out that this was the first novel Hardy could write at leisure and carefully revise before publishing. In style, as in other matters, it consequently shows a meticulous consistency.

attitude of Hardy for instance has dictated the use of representative proper names; so that the novel may without impropriety be said to have a veritable language of nomenclature. He enriches his local dialect by Shakespearean associations: that which "owes most to literary reminiscence" being "nearest to life."⁵⁵ He achieves moral overtones by overt allusion to the Bible and by implicit reference to Greek tragedy. He evokes an atmosphere of brooding apprehensiveness by use of folk superstition.⁵⁶ All the greater novels possess a tragic tone because "they embody an emotive exposition of Thomas Hardy's philosophy."⁵⁷

Because Hardy's "philosophy precedes and determines his fiction . . ."⁵⁸ even to a fault in such books as *Tess* and *Jude*, his novels show a sense of form, "the result of a willing obedience given by all the materials to a presiding interest."⁵⁹ Hardy's "presiding interest" in the *Mayor* is suggested by reference in the subtitle to the "Man of Character." Considering Hardy's conception of Henchard's defects, and the significance which he gives to the settings and the imagery, the reader can hardly take "Man of Character" otherwise than as ironic reference to the aggressive, self-willed, impassioned popular ideal of nineteenth century society. Henchard may be Hardy's tragic hero, but he can hardly be Hardy's ideal man any more than Satan, whether or not he is Milton's tragic hero, can be thought to be Milton's ideal spirit.

Not that Hardy does not in the final envelope section follow with anguished sympathy Henchard's bleak autumnal⁶⁰ pilgrimage back to Weydon-Priors, and his slow circling of Casterbridge, like a setting sun, to the west, until he is drawn mag-

⁵⁵ S. S. Chew, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

⁵⁶ Perhaps because of aesthetic trust in "visible-essences" Hardy was superstitious, refusing on that account to be weighed (*Early Life*, p. 228), and believing half the time in "spectres, mysterious voices, intuitions, omens, dreams, haunted places, etc., etc." (F. E. Hardy, *Later Years*, p. 271). See also reference to the mysterious stranger, *ibid.*, p. 259.

⁵⁷ E. A. Baker, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁵⁹ L. Abercrombie, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

⁶⁰ Note that the three scenes at Weydon-Priors are all laid in mid-September, giving a significant autumnal tone to the incidents that occur there. Henchard's death falls appropriately in bleak winter. Seasonal as well as historical time is used to suggest overtones of meaning.

netically back to Elizabeth-Jane's wedding. But Hardy's sympathy is a mingling of that given by Sophocles to old, supplanted, fatally-sinning Oedipus and by Milton to fallen Lucifer, to whom indeed Henchard seems to be compared as he stands at the wedding feast—"a dark ruin, obscured by 'the shade from his own soul upthrown'";⁶¹ and I suppose Oedipus and Satan can hardly be objects of our emulation, however much we pity them.

Hardy does temper his judgment of Henchard by indicating, with the goldfinch starved in its cage because of events which it could not foresee or control, how helpless the fallen mayor was; but in this respect the author only expresses in a new way what Sophocles had by fateful oracles and Milton by God's will to permit evil to enter the world.

As we trail Henchard to his death in a decrepit clay cottage, long the symbol of mortality—

The soul's dark cottage, battered and decayed,
Lets in new light through chinks that time has made—⁶²

which stands in black Egdon, symbol of untamed nature, we feel an inevitability that amounts to aesthetic propriety. In spite of the painfulness of what happens, we know that what is happening under the circumstances would, and in some curious way, should happen. Hardy, whose "abstract thought" on critical problems is only slightly less suggestive than his "abstract imaginings" on life, has his explanation of this phenomenon also:

Among the qualities which appertain to representations of life, construed, though not distorted, by the light of imagination—qualities which are seldom shared by views *about* life, however profound—is that of self-proof or obviousness.⁶³

Hardy achieves "self-proof or obviousness" in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* through "representations of life construed, though not distorted, by the light of imagination. . . ." In this novel the characters, the events, the settings, the images by

⁶¹ *Mayor of Casterbridge* (Mod. Lib. ed.), p. 421.

⁶² From Edmund Waller's "Of the Last Verses in the Book." Compare the symbolic use of the ruined cottage in Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* and in the first book of Wordsworth's *Excursion*.

⁶³ "Profitable Reading," *Forum*, V, p. 60.

which the author expresses himself have a self-contained organic unity as "visible essences" of that intuitive insight which is artistic truth.

Effectiveness in the arts can never correspond to the mere similitude of reality, even in that art which is called "realistic." In "realistic" as in all other art the artist would be baffled in any attempt to reproduce the infinite variety and scope of nature in a medium limited in finite time or space. He can only contrive a kind of shorthand selection of unusually typical details arranged in extraordinarily meaningful groupings to suggest an illusion of that reality that can really exist only in nature itself.⁶⁴

Concentration, intensifying experience, though forced upon the artist by the limitations of his medium, has to be sought by him anyway in order to secure the aesthetic pleasure proper to his art. The difference between nature—defined as everything that exists—and art—defined as everything made by man—is that in nature God or some other humanly incomprehensible power has wrought with only incidental relevance to human desire but that in art (and most completely in that which is abstract) men have adapted to human desire what is humanly comprehensible in nature. The greater the significance that can be molded to human desire in the work of art, the greater obviously is our satisfaction. For this reason all artists strive to intensify their effects to the utmost.

Intensification of narrative has probably occurred in all literary periods in all ways possible to the medium. Henchard is certainly not more symbolic as a character than Oedipus or Satan, Wessex no more so as a setting than Thebes or Hell, and surely neither Hardy's selection of narrative events or his rich and allusive mode of expression should startle anybody familiar with his great predecessors. The enrichment of narrative goes in different eras under different names. I have demonstrated elsewhere that Thackeray in the mid-nineteenth century was making full use of the techniques of symbolism.⁶⁵ I think it

⁶⁴ Hardy knew that the "most devoted apostle of realism, the sheerest naturalist, cannot escape any more than the withered gossip over her fire, the exercise of Art in his labor or pleasure of telling a tale." "The Science of Fiction," *New Review*, IV (1891), p. 316.

⁶⁵ "Rachel Esmond and the Dilemma of the Victorian Ideal of Womanhood," *ELH*, Vol. 13, Sept., 1946.

would not be difficult to demonstrate use of similar devices in such realistic works as the *Forsyte Saga* or the *Old Wives' Tale* on the one hand or in such eighteenth century tales as *Rasselas* and *Tristram Shandy* on the other. Bunyan and Swift are at one with Joyce and Proust in their determination to make a narrative carry all the meaning that it possibly can.

What are called symbols by today's authors were "visible essences" to Hardy. He employed them with perfect consciousness and for the same reason that all great narrators have always employed them: to achieve the maximum effect possible in his art.

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